

THE RECORD CONNOISSEUR'S MAGAZINE

# THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER

MARCH, 1940

## CONTEST - ORCHESTRAL MUSIC

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RECORD NOTES & REVIEWS - OVERTONES

COLLECTORS' CORNER - SWING MUSIC NOTES - ETC.



Edited by  
PETER HUGH REED

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# THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER

All Worthwhile Recordings Reviewed

Volume 5, No. 11

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Frontispiece: Prominent Musical Personalities — Past and Present  
No. 29 — Kirsten Flagstad



Patti as Juliet

## ADELINA PATTI

FAMOUS SINGERS' SERIES - NO. 2

STEPHEN FASSETT & ARTHUR WALDECK

**I**T SEEMS INCREDIBLE THAT ADELINA PATTI, whose long career was at its height in the 1870s, should have lived to make recordings of her celebrated voice. But she did, and even though the records were made in 1905 and 1906, they are distinctly worth while, and give us a very good idea of the voice and art of the famous diva.

Possibly none of our readers has had the privilege of hearing Patti in person, and to most she is hardly more than a name:—Adelina Patti, the legendary queen of song. Perhaps the name calls up one of her photographs, showing a slim, pretty, rather coquettish little woman dressed in the style of long ago.

Adelina Patti had one of the most remarkable careers in the history of singing. She was born in Madrid on February 10th, 1843. Both her parents were busy opera singers, and it is only a slight exaggeration to say that the arrival of little Adelina prevented her mother from finishing an operatic performance.

While she was still a baby, her family came to America, settling in New York City, where her father was for a time the manager of an Italian opera company. The atmosphere in which the child grew up could not have been better calculated to produce a great singer. Everyone in the family sang, and from morning till night the Patti dwelling resounded with scales, trills and cadenzas. Is it any wonder that Adelina could sing almost before she could talk?

By the time she was six, her voice was incredibly mature, and only a year later this wonder child made her New York debut. For the next five years she sang in concerts, creating a sensation wherever she was heard. In 1855 she was wisely withdrawn for further study, but reappeared in 1859, making a highly successful operatic debut in New York as Lucia. She was then 16 years old. Two years later occurred the first of her innumerable triumphs in London.

The years that followed saw the unfolding of one of the longest and most glorious careers in operatic history—a career that is still without a parallel. In America and Europe she sang in opera from 1859 to 1895—thirty six years of undiminished popularity. Then she appeared regularly and profitably in concert until 1906. Even thereafter she occasionally emerged from retirement, making her last public appearance in October, 1914, when she sang in London for the Red Cross War Fund. Five years later she died in her seventy sixth year.

These are some of the facts of her career. But what was it that made Adelina Patti such a great singer? Probably no one can give a precise answer to such a question, but we can say that she was born with a miraculous gift for song which the circumstances of her life allowed her to develop and preserve with a rare degree of perfection.

The late Hermann Klein said that Patti told him that "she never studied the art of producing or emitting the voice. Nature, alone and unaided, accomplished that marvel. To keep the organ in perfect condition, she had but to run over the scales ten minutes each morning. Her vocalization was one of those miracles that cannot be explained. . . Her ear was



phenomenal. She never forgot a tune, and would instantly name the opera or composition in which it occurred. Another mystery was the perennial freshness of her voice, which, after a half a century of constant use, retained well-nigh unimpaired the delicious sweetness and bell-like timbre of early womanhood. . . The triumphs of this incomparable artist never "spoiled" her. The homage of kings, the adulation of friends, the applause of multitudes, did not rob of her of that unaffected simplicity, that freedom from ostentation, that yearning for home life and domestic tranquillity, which were her most characteristic attributes."

Patti's voice was a bewitching coloratura soprano. It was a large voice, according to a reliable reporter, superb in its color, warmth and flexibility. The quality was always clear and ringing throughout a perfectly equalized scale, but at the same time it was rich and "dark". This kind of vocal tone is so rare that since Caruso no singer has presented the same entrancing characteristic. When we learn that in addition Patti sang with the spontaneity and joyous ease of a bird, we can understand her tremendous appeal. Lilli Lehmann said of Patti, "Although she was born in Spain she was, I might say, the greatest Italian singer of my time."

Rossini was Patti's favorite operatic composer, and she also loved Mozart, Bellini, Donizetti, Verdi and Meyerbeer, shining particularly in the roles which permitted her to display her delightful talent for comedy. In later years she came to admire Wagner, but,

except for a few concert performances of *Elizabeth's Prayer* from *Tannhäuser* and the song *Träume*, she never sang his music.

It speaks well for her versatility that she coped successfully with the dramatic music of Verdi's *Aida*. Adelina Patti's only operatic failure was *Carmen*.

She knew well the pure style of Handel, too, but as far as the general public was concerned, it was enough that she sang. It was like that throughout her career.

Patti had a curious aversion to the gramophone for a long time before she made records. She regarded it as a new-fangled toy. It has been said that had she made records a half dozen years before she did, her income from this source would have been very large. Klein tells us that the phonograph companies tried every available device, even following her to her hotels when she went abroad; but she declined to be caught, until one last day, in sheer despair, she turned to a persistent representative of the H.M.V. company and told him to see her solicitor, saying whatever he agreed upon she would do.

The conditions imposed by her solicitor were as follows: The company was to take their apparatus down to her castle in Wales; have it ready for immediate use; and wait there from day to day until the lady was willing to sing. All this was done; but many days passed before she declared herself ready. "Then with her accustomed ardor," says Klein, "she threw herself heart and soul into the business, and did not desist until she had made eight or ten excellent records . . .



Patti as Leonora



As Marguerite



As Martha

Happily her feelings changed towards the gramophone from the moment when she first heard her own records. This was two or three days after she had finished making them." On this occasion she was coming down to déjeuner, "and was descending the main staircase to the hall (where the instrument had cunningly been placed), when the tones of her own voice fell for the first time upon her ear. One who was present relates that she stopped, turned visibly pale, clutched at the bannisters, and remained where she was standing until the piece was finished. Then she ran quickly down the steps to the hall, and exclaiming, 'Oh, you darling!' threw her arms around the horn of the gramophone. Her aversion had been conquered by her own voice."

Patti's first published records were made in 1905 in her tremendous and fantastic castle in Wales, which was her home for many years. In 1906 she recorded again, bringing the total to about twenty records, most of which are still obtainable on special order.

Of course, one must always keep in mind that the records show the voice of a woman past sixty who had been singing for more than half a century. She was well beyond her prime at the time, and the art of recording was far from its present excellence.

Not one of the records is without a flaw. Most of the high notes are labored, and they often drop in pitch. Her breath does not hold out and phrases have to be broken. Sometimes she is badly hurried.

Yet to an understanding ear the records are full of beauty and an indescribable charm, and there are frequent glimpses of that mastery of nuance, shading and style which marks a great singer. With a little imagination one can reconstruct from these recordings the sound of Patti's voice as it was in her prime.

The records must be played at their proper speeds. These have been given in parentheses after the title of each selection mentioned. The numbers that follow are the H.M.V. catalogue ones.

Of her recorded operatic arias, the best seem to be: *Norma—Casta Diva* (76) 03082; *Faust—Air des Bijoux* (75) 03056; *La Son-nambula—Ah! non credea* (76) 03084; *Mignon—Connais-tu le pays?* (76) 03083.

One of the writers of this article has a particular love for the *Air des bijoux*, with its youthful verve and shimmering color in all but the upper notes. The latter, alas, fall out of the picture.

One of Patti's friends was Tosti, the popular Italian composer, whose songs she often sang. In 1906 she recorded his *La Serenata*

(76) 03079, which gives a good example of her singing at the time. Warmth and charm are there, and a lucent, flute-like quality, but the effect is somewhat marred when the pitch sags on the last note. In spite of this, the singing is a beautiful achievement.

Unlike most coloratura sopranos, Patti was a highly successful concert artist. This was because she could sing simple songs as well as brilliant operatic arias. After her retirement from opera in 1895, she continued her career even more profitably than before by giving a series of concert tours.

In the United States she toured in a private railroad car which took her all over the country, and down into Mexico as well. In those days such a tour was a real adventure and no doubt when the exquisite little prima donna returned home to England she had many a colorful story to tell about her experiences in the Great American Desert.

The most popular feature of a typical Patti concert was her singing of the ever popular old ballads like *Comin' thro' the Rye* (76) 03061; *The Old Folks at Home* (76) 03054; *Robin Adair* (77) 03059; and *Home Sweet Home* (76) 03056. For these she had a genuine flair and it was only natural that she should record a number of them.

Of all the ballads Patti used to sing, *Home Sweet Home* was the favorite for more than half a century. In his book, *The Reign of Patti*, Hermann Klein tells us that she always sang it exactly the same way, never failing to reduce her audience to tears. We wonder what he thought of her record, for it is an interesting example of good and bad taste existing side by side. The grace notes and the prima donna cadenza at the end seem to us now just as dated and just as bad taste as the horrible gewgaws with which the Victorians loved to clutter up their homes. But we should not be too hard on Patti, for after all, she was only following the accepted standards of her time. Maybe if she were singing today she would conform to our taste by leaving out the superfluous decorations which we find so objectionable. Aside from these faults, Patti sings in this record with a touching warmth of expression and frequently her tones display much of their old time beauty.

Perhaps Patti's finest record, both as to voice and style, is the famous classic, *Pur Dicasti* (76) 03052, written by Lotti, an Italian composer born in the 17th century. It was always a favorite of Patti for it gave her a legitimate opportunity to show her fabulous trill, which remained to the end a perfect feature of her singing. We have never heard



Patti as Dinorah



As Rosina



As La Catarina

any trill to equal Patti's, on or off records, with the possible exception of Melba's melting shake.

For final mention there is the recording of a Spanish song, *La Calesera* (76?) I.R.C.C., No. 17. This record has an interesting history. Made in 1906, when Patti was 63, it was withdrawn a few months later because it was too powerful and brilliant for the crude phonographs of the time. A few years ago, however,

it was reissued by The International Record Collectors Club of Bridgeport, Conn., and was found to be the most vivid and life-like record Patti ever made. She sings with such verve and abandon that it is impossible to believe that a career of more than fifty years lay behind her.

For those who love singing, there is great inspiration and, if they care for it, much instruction, in the records of Adelina Patti.

## GRAMOPHONIANA

### 3. CUT IN WAX-SOME NOTES ON CAL STEWART

#### ULYSSES WALSH

*"I'd Sooner Tell Peter on the Last Day About the Laffs I Had Given Folks on Earth than Try to Explain to Him about Givin' Them Heart Akes"—Cal Stewart, in the character of "Uncle Josh."*

*"If there was one thing. . . which ought to entitle "Uncle Josh". . . to a high place among surviving mortals it was his power to laugh at himself. It takes a pretty big man to do that."—James E. Richardson in the February, 1921, Victor record catalog monthly supplement.*

#### I.

**S**OMETHING LIKE TWENTY YEARS HAVE now passed since Cal Stewart went, presumably, to be with the St. Peter whom he humorously mentioned in the

short sentence that set forth his philosophy of life. Two decades usually are ample time for the public to forget a comedian.

But that, as far as my observation goes, is by no means true of the man whose livelihood during a twenty-five year period came mostly from recording humorous "rube" sketches for the various phonograph companies. It may be that comparatively few people today have a clear idea of who or what Cal Stewart was, but the memory of his once world-famous "Uncle Josh" is still green, just as Charlie McCarthy is likely to be recalled when Edgar Bergen is forgotten.

Every Sunday afternoon I, as "the Old Wreck with the Old Records," give a radio program of old-time popular songs and skits from a Tennessee station, and I have found

that Cal Stewart's tales of the antics of Uncle Josh and other denizens of the mythical village of Punkin Center not only give the listeners a good laugh but that records by him are called for almost more than those by any other artist. I suspect this means that, for all the jitterbugging and pseudo-sophistication in vogue today, the long dead comedian's grasp on the fundamentals of human character and his essential sincerity are still powerful enough to make an appeal to the average American citizen.

This ties in well, incidentally, with my theory, diametrically opposed to that usually held by record collectors, that the "popular" records loved years ago by the middle classes are likely in coming years to be so much esteemed as choice examples of "Americana" that historians generally will find more of permanent interest in them than in the more pretentious Red Seal stuff. Sometimes I suspect I approach the problem of record collecting essentially more from a historical than a musicianly standpoint, so possibly my viewpoint is biased. However that may be, I can't imagine anything which would give a truer-to-life and more vivid picture of the New England rural life of a generation or two ago than Stewart provided in his "Uncle Josh" records.

I am reminded here that, although the record labels usually described the "Josh" skits as "Yankee monolog" or something of that sort, their New England character was not always recognized. An English phonograph magazine of the early 1900's, for instance, referred to them as "amusing examples of the humor of the American Wild West." But perhaps that naive obtuseness was only to be expected from a publication which was capable of considering "Hitchy Koo" (described years ago by the American magazine, *McCall's*, as "probably the most suggestive popular song ever written in the United States"—that was years ago, remember) "a lullaby sung on the old Southern plantation to his pickaninny by a black father." Well, it may be that an argument could be put that the "daddy" with "the cutest little thing" that had "the cutest little swing" was merely singing to sleep a cullud child!

## II.

Most people, after listening to half a dozen "Josh" records, undoubtedly would make a wrong guess as to where the genial old trouper spent his boyhood. I was born in Richmond, Virginia, and am told I have never succeeded in shaking off an Eastern Virginia drawl in

spite of the fact that my parents left the capitol city of the Confederacy when I was six weeks old, and I have never seen it since. It is a proverb in the South that a Tennessean or a North Carolinian will "go North" for six months and return home talking out of the corner of his mouth and sporting a chaste East Side accent, but a "Soreback" (contemptuous Carolina term for a Virginian) may hang around Broadway and Forty-second street for fifty years and not change in the slightest his ungodly way of speaking. Never having been to New York myself, I can't say authoritatively about that, but I know it would never have occurred to me that Cal Stewart was, like me, a son of the Old Dominion.

Yet we have it on the authority of the presumably authoritative Columbia record supplement that he was. In the December, 1919, issue page six is given up to a photograph of Stewart (wearing a large slouch hat, sitting at a table, with a cigar in his mouth and a glass within easy reach and looking much younger than in the picture Victor used in its February, 1921, booklet), and page seven contains the following information:

"Cal Stewart, the author and maker of the 'Uncle Josh Punkin Center' stories, is a native of Virginia and descended from good old Scotch ancestors. His early career was connected with the old minstrels, the school which produced many of our best loved comedians. Stewart's knowledge of life, which he so humorously portrays in his Columbia records, comes from his various experiences as a stage-coach driver, a locomotive engineer and an actor. 'Cal', as he is familiarly known to his thousands of admirers from coast to coast, writes as well as recites his own monologs and, naturally, records his own Columbia records."

The September, 1920, Columbia supplement said:

"Cal Stewart is a native of Virginia. His father and mother were Scotch, which accounts for his real name, Calvin. Stewart's first professional appearance was in a Baltimore theater as a pickaninny servant character in a play called 'The Hidden Hand.' Stewart once remarked he had what he called a 'Huckleberry Finn' career. He has been a stage-coach driver, a locomotive engineer, a minstrel star and an express company messenger."

The information sketchily set forth in the Columbia bulletins is about all I have to go on with reference to "Uncle Josh's" earlier career. I do recall reading elsewhere that he appeared with Denman Thompson for years



Cal Stewart in  
his later years

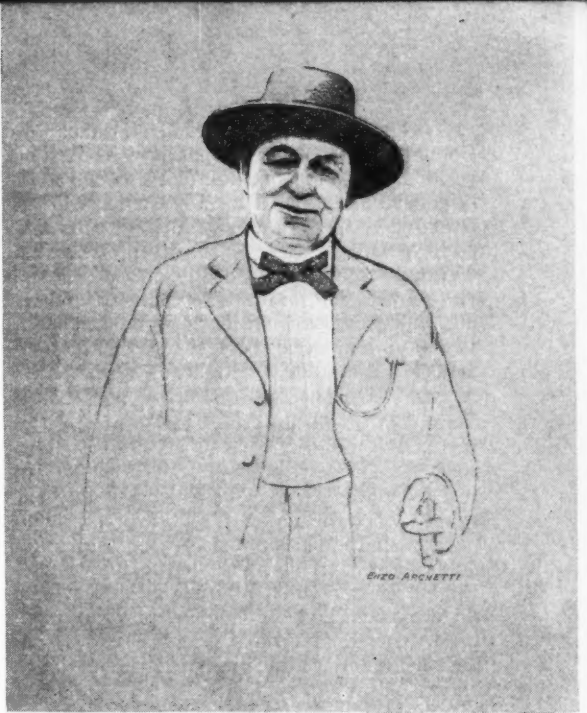
in "The Old Homestead" and frequently served as Thompson's understudy. Never having seen or read "The Old Homestead," I'm not certain whether its chief character is an "Uncle Josh," but have an idea it may be. At any rate, it is more than likely that his experience in the classic American sob-drama of rural life gave Stewart his first impetus toward becoming an arch delineator of rusticity.

It would be interesting to know more about Cal's experiences as express messenger, stage-coach and locomotive pilot and minstrel comedian, but we unfortunately lack adequate material. Suppose we move up, then, to the days when Uncle Josh's nasal drawl began to appear on fragile wax cylinders designed for use on the once new and mysterious phonograph, graphophone or talking machine.

### III.

At least a generation ago Rex Beach wrote a novel called "Goin' Some," the plot of which was concerned chiefly with a group of cowboys who lost their treasured phonograph in some sort of foolhardy competition against the denizens of another ranch. The story obviously was set in the '90's, for much emphasis was laid on the preliminary announcements on the cylinders, which informed the hearer that the number then being played was performed for "the Echo Phonograph Company of New York and Pa-a-ris!" Columbia records in the '90's had that type of announcement, which would indicate Beach based his "Echo" brand on the slogan of America's pioneer record manufacturer. Among the cowboys' repertoires were such classics as "In the Baggage Coach Ahead," sung by Helena Mora, the "lady baritone" (I wonder if she ever did make records?), "The Holy City," sung by "Madame Melby" (that was a slip on the author's part, since Melba didn't record during the '90's and certainly never sang for cylinders at any time) and "Silas on Fifth Avenue." One of the cowhands was never able to hear the latter monolog about the girl who "took out her purse and opened her purse, and shut her purse, and opened her purse" without becoming helpless from mirth.

Now, it is obvious to any student of old-time records that "Silas" was merely a thin disguise for Uncle Josh. I have a Victor record of "Uncle Josh on Fifth Avenue," in which that same rigmarole about the girl opening and shutting her purse occurs, and it is funny. But the point I am making is that, judging by Beach's book alone, Uncle Josh was well established as a favorite on records



in days antedating the Spanish-American war.

My old friend, Dan W. Quinn, about whom I wrote a sketch for the *Music Lovers' Guide* in 1934, died a year ago. Sometime before his death he told me he recalled Cal Stewart as breaking into the record making field "in or around 1893," in other words, about the time the first Chicago World's Fair was getting under way. Stewart, even then noted in vaudeville for his Josh specialties, began with the old New Jersey Phonograph Company or one of the other pioneer licensed "state" companies of that day. Those were the days when there was no permanent master record, and the singer, player or comedian was obliged to do same stunt over and over again into a row of horns.

Stewart was not the first popular recording monologist. Before the Columbia company moved from Washington to New York in 1896, a Washingtonian named W. O. Beckenbaugh, who boasted a sobriquet, "The Leather-lunged Auctioneer," was in demand as a maker of comic talking records. Len Spencer later improved upon and made use of much of his material such as "Auction Sale of Household Goods." And Russell Hunting, who is still alive, or was a few months ago, though in infirm health, had a long series of the enormously popular "Casey" monologs to his credit. Hunting's name does not appear in the 1895 Columbia catalog, but in the 1896 one he is credited with sixteen "Casey" skits and five songs.

Neither is Cal Stewart listed in those old Columbia pamphlets. Apparently he had not yet established a connection with the Columbia organization. But in an 1899 record catalog issued by the Talking Machine Company (which later became Babson Brothers) of Chicago, which included Edison and Columbia records indiscriminately without indicating which company made any given cylinder, appears a long series of Josh skits. The numbers, all in the 7000's, indicate they were of Edison origin.

I'm not at all sure any reader of the *Musical Lover* other than myself has even an academic interest in these old records, but, just for the sake of preserving a possibly useless bit of information for posterity, I'm doing myself the pleasure of copying the list for publication here. Those who know their Punkin Center will see at a glance that many sketches which were highly popular many years afterward on discs had already made their debut before the Twentieth Century came along:

7600, Uncle Josh's Arrival in New York; 7601, Uncle Josh at a Camp Meeting; 7602, Uncle Josh at Delmonico's; 7603, Uncle Josh at the Circus; 7604, Uncle Josh at the Fire Department in New York; 7605, Uncle Josh at the Stock Exchange; 7606, Uncle Josh at the Opera; 7607, Uncle Josh's Comments on the Signs Seen in New York; 7608, Uncle Josh's Experience in a Street Car; 7609, Uncle Josh Gives an Invitation to the City Folks to Visit Him Down on the Farm; 7610, Uncle Josh Has a Ride on a Fifth Ave. Bus; 7611, Uncle Josh in a Department Store; 7612, Uncle Josh Has a Game of Baseball; 7613, Uncle Josh's Remarks on the Spanish Question; 7614, Uncle Josh's Trip to Coney Island; 7615, Uncle Josh at a Baptism at the Hickory Corner Church; 7616, Uncle Josh in a Police Court; 7617, Uncle Josh on the Bowery; 7618, Uncle Josh and the Bunco Steerers; 7619, Uncle Josh in a Museum; 7620, Uncle Josh on a Bicycle; 7621, Uncle Josh at a Meeting of the School Directors; 7622, Uncle Josh at a Husking Bee (with violin accompaniment).

Some of the long-winded titles given here were pared down considerably on disc record labels. One which I think never reached the discs but which I'd particularly like to hear was "Uncle Josh's Remarks on the Spanish Question." The subject had become passé by the time discs were in common use (unless, indeed, Josh's patriotic witticisms were crowded onto some now forgotten primitive seven-inch Berliner platter), but Uncle's comments should have been worth hearing.

#### IV.

I said a few paragraphs above that the list of monologs I have quoted was of Edison origin. Now, on second thought, I'm not sure. Edison records were being numbered in the 7000's in 1898 and 1899, but it was contrary to that company's policy to catalog a long "string" by one artist under consecutive numbers, and reference to an Edison list dated November 20, 1899, shows the top number then to have been just slightly above 7300, or 300 lower than the Josh series just quoted. The Talking Machine Company issued some records of its own make—it had, for instance, exclusive rights to the services of Silas Leachman, "the King of Coon Shouters"—and Stewart may have made his Uncle Josh numbers specially for them.

He was, however, recording for Edison in 1899. In the list I have before me appear two Cal Stewart cylinders: No. 7298, "The Daily Paper at Pumpkin Center," and another which would indeed prove interesting to a present-day historian if a copy could be found.

I refer to No. 7252, "Uncle Sam to George," which bore the following explanatory comment:

"The sailors of Admiral Dewey's fleet were entertained Saturday night, September 30, at a 'smoker' at the Waldorf-Astoria. The Admiral was there. Cal Stewart delivered this stirring patriotic poem in his quaint Yankee dialect."

One is here reminded somehow of a similar scene some twenty years before when Mark Twain had been a guest at a dinner honoring Ulysses S. Grant and brought those present to their feet in wild cheering when he told how "Unconditional Surrender" Grant probably as a baby succeeded in forcing his big toe into his mouth. Both Twain and Stewart had spent part of their early lives in the West, only to return East, and both had to the fullest the indigenous flavor of Americanism. Perhaps Cal recognized this fact subconsciously when he said his had been a "Huckleberry Finn" sort of career.

Without going farther into that, enough has been quoted, I think, to show that, well before 1900, Cal Stewart and his Uncle Josh had established themselves as American institutions. They certainly had by 1904, when Victor had been making records three years. In the April, 1904, Victor supplement, record M2660, "The Baptizing at Hickory Corners" is listed, and the annotator says: "This is one of 'Cal's' best stories and is told in the entertaining manner which has made Uncle Josh famous everywhere."



## V.

What, those unfamiliar with the records of an earlier day may ask, were the Uncle Josh records like?

The answer is that in his less important way Stewart created a group of characters who have the same vitality and verisimilitude as the Mississippi river people of "Tom Sawyer" and "Huckleberry Finn," in spite of the fact that the Uncle Josh contingent obviously hails from "Way Down East." I for one never hear the expression, "A Connecticut Yankee," without reflecting that Uncle Josh seems the perfect embodiment of that type of humanity.

It has already been said that Josh and his myriad of friends live in a mythical village, Punkin Center. One of the chief characters is Aunt Nancy Smith, who had been married several times but eventually became the wife of Uncle Josh. (In the record of "The Wedding of Uncle Josh and Aunt Nancy Smith" the "Punkin Center Quartet" sings "She May Have Seen Better Days" as a tactful tribute to the bride.) Aunt Nancy for several years was played by Mrs. Cal Stewart, but later Ada Jones always took the part. I don't know whether Mrs. Stewart died or only retired from record making. Neither do I know whether the Uncle Josh and Aunt Nancy of real life had children.

Another character, once familiar to millions of record buyers, was Jim Lawson, a rather shifty, irascible hayseed who frequently found himself in a peck of trouble. "Jim Lawson's Hogs" was a popular skit about him. Then there was Ezry Hoskins, who ran the "grusry store"; Deacon Witherspoon, pious, whittling, tobacco-chewing churchman; Si Pettingill, Reuben Hendricks, Cynthia Lawson (Jim's wife) and a host of other rustics, all of whom, as described in the drawling vernacular of Uncle Josh, had their separate, clear-cut individualities. Combined, they sufficed to make Punkin Center a real place to legions of listeners. A friend living in Decatur, Illinois, once told me a certain outlying bucolic appendage to the city had become known throughout Decatur as Punkin Center because of its inhabitants' real or supposititious resemblance to the Josh folks.

A typical Uncle Josh record, popular for many years, is "Uncle Josh Keeps House." In it Stewart, with frequent punctuations by his famous chuckle, tells how Nancy went to see a sick "widdier woman" and he was called on to take care of Cinthy Lawson's small son. Nancy gave Uncle Josh instructions not to let

the soft soap "bile" over and to watch for any signs of the bees' swarming and to do a number of other chores, but the Lawson boy's incessant curiosity and activity made it hard for Josh-u-way to do anything but try to keep an eye on him. While answering the youth's questions Josh dropped his chewing tobacco into the churn, broke his spectacles and had various other mishaps. Then a bee "bit" the boy, the rest of the bees swarmed, the soap "biled" over, Uncle Josh durn nigh got his neck broken by running into a clothesline, and chaos reigned until Nancy fortunately returned and set things to rights, with the caustic comment that "men are sich helpless critters!"

## VI.

So the "Uncle Josh" saga went merrily along from year to year. The comedian grew older—he was probably forty or more when he began recording back in the '90's—but increasing years only added to the mellowness of his interpretation.

His popularity was such, too, that vaudeville theaters throughout the world eagerly sought his personal appearances. A 1915 Victor supplement said (I quote from memory): "Everybody was glad to learn recently that genial Cal Stewart had returned from his tours, which took him over a great part of the world." Cal showed he had kept fully up-to-date, too, by producing one of his most amusing records, "War Talk at Punkin Center," at the end of which he sang an irresistible little ditty, "Gee, I Wish I Was a Belgian!" in which he humorously complained that while Nancy and the rest of the wimmin-folks were zealously making clothes for the inhabitants of war-torn Belgium they were too busy to patch his pants, which he was obliged to keep in place with a ten-penny nail.

It was in 1919 that age began to catch up with the old fellow who had done about as much as anybody of his generation to keep Americans laughing at a simple, homespun but always clean type of humor.

One day he and the American Quartet, then consisting of Billy Murray, Steve Porter, John Young and Donald Chalmers, were recording one of the funniest of the Punkin Center skits, "Train Time at Punkin Center."

This was a number they made for several companies—Victor, Edison and Pathé among them—and Billy Murray isn't sure in whose laboratory the following occurred, although he believes it was Victor's. At any rate, the little "stock company" was about half-way through the sketch when Billy noticed that Stewart appeared ill.

"His appearance worried me," Billy says, "so I nudged Don Chalmers as a warning to keep an eye on Cal. Suddenly the old man lurched forward and we barely caught him in time to keep him from toppling against the recording horn. He had suffered a stroke of paralysis."

## VII.

The quotation from the 1921 Victor supplement printed at the beginning of this article termed Uncle Josh "a pretty big man" because he could always enjoy laughing at a joke at his own expense. Cal Stewart was a real man in another respect that would win him the admiration of any old-time trouper.

Paralysis or no paralysis, he was strongly determined to make a very good record of that sketch which had been interrupted by his fall. He rested a while, while his anxious associates looked on, then dragged himself by main force back in front of that horn and managed to talk as naturally and laugh as infectiously as he ever had. They took him home then.

Stewart regained his strength in great part as time went on, and within a few months was again making records. However, his number was almost up. One day, while standing again in front of a recording horn—he never lived to see the day sound impulses were collected electrically—he had a second stroke. Before the end of 1920, paralysis killed him.

## VIII.

The comedian's death, however, did not put an immediate end to his stream of records. He had made a number which had not been issued at the time of his passing and these continued to be placed on the market at intervals for a year or two afterward. His final one for Victor, offered for sale in 1922, was entitled on one side "Uncle Josh Buys a Victrola" and was one of his best. Here the jovial old comedian revived most of his old cronies and told how he had bought a "Victor-Victrola" and invited all Punkin Center in to listen. The neighbors sat, open-eared and open-mouthed, as they heard a mere machine divulging their most intimate secrets, and Cynthia Lawson, who seems to have shared her husband's irascible disposition, "got mad as a wet hen." Well, considering all the gossip Josh had retailed in his time, perhaps she had reason.

One interesting thing was that, although Stewart passed on, the demand for Uncle Josh records continued to such an extent that

some companies, which either had not been in existence before his death or for some reason or other had not engaged his services, obtained other comedians to give more or less faithful imitations of his work. Cal had made Pathé sapphire-cut records, but when the company began to issue the needle-type Actuelle discs it had Byron G. Harlan, of beloved memory, deliver several Uncle Josh monologs.

I have not heard these but would imagine that Harlan, who was, as Sam Rous, for years a Victor supplement writer, once remarked, "a born rube, anyway," did a corking job, especially since he had occasionally worked with Stewart, and the two together made "Village Gossips," one of the most popular of the Punkin Center series. I have a Grey Gull record containing two Josh monologs made, so the label says, by one Duncan Jones, but the voice is so exactly Stewart's I suspect the company had obtained some Stewart masters, probably once the property of a then defunct company, and had put them on the market under a pseudonym. Stewart appears, too, to have been out of the United States around 1906 and 1907, for a performer named Andrew Keefe recorded some of the "Josh" material in those days.

Uncle Josh, incidentally, did not pretend to be much of a singer, but he did depart from his monolog style occasionally and record a few "laughing songs" of his own composition. "I Laughed at the Wrong Time," telling how he managed to get into trouble as a boy by guffawing at anything but the psychological moment, was one. Others were "And Then I Laughed," "I'm Old But I'm Awfully Tough," "Three Little Owls and the Naughty Little Mice" and and "Monkey On a String."

## IX.

Today, as I said in the beginning, Cal Stewart has been dead nearly twenty years. I don't think any of his records are listed in any present-day American catalog, although a number were included in the Victor compilation of records of historical and personal interest, issued in 1927. Judged by the criterion of present-day sales, Uncle Josh belongs to the dead past.

However, the truth is not quite so brutal. My own experience convinces me that he and the other members of the Punkin Center galaxy are far from forgotten, and I should not be surprised to learn that there are still in existence a good many thousand copies of the book in which Stewart a good many years ago published the best of the Uncle Josh monologs. People—some people—today read

the printed version of these sketches, and laugh, just as thousands of others still hang on to their old "Josh records" and get a laugh out of them occasionally.

I must admit that spoken humor never has had the appeal for me that comedy set to music unfailingly possesses and that I don't often play an Uncle Josh record for my own amusement, but I do recognize that Cal Stewart was, in his plebeian way, an artist and that he managed, by the power of his unaided speaking voice and gift of impersonation, to provide posterity with one of the most faithful guides it can ever hope to have as to what the rural life of the United States was like from the Civil war period to, say, fifty years

afterward. This, I believe it will some day be recognized, was no small achievement and is one which entitles the erstwhile stagecoach driver and express messenger to grateful recollection.

In the long reach of time, I suspect, Uncle Josh will rate considerably higher than monologists like Dwight Fiske, who specialize in ever so subtle dirtiness. But perhaps I'm wrong. I probably am, because I have been told more than once I am a hopeless reactionary for believing that enjoyable popular music virtually went out when ragtime died and that "swing" is an invention which I would call diabolical if I did not believe even the devil would think twice before claiming as his own!

## ADVENTURES IN A LONDON RECORD SHOP

F. T. BOWERS

■ A summer in England, chiefly to study but also to play hooky in the London record shops. For the past year I have been casting envious eyes on the lists of foreign record releases too magnificent at imported prices for my slim wallet and apparently doomed never to be released in America. My budget warns that ten pounds must cover all records. That means I must try not to anticipate American releases but to confine myself to Parlophone, to some Deccas that I want and will not buy on the American grindstone surfaces, and to the H.M.V. records which by past performance will never see the light of day under a Victor label. Also some Columbias.

Where to go? *The American Music Lover* says Rimington, Van Wyck's in London. Is Peter Reed log-rolling? An unworthy thought; so the first day I hunt up Cranbourn St. on my map, and there it is conveniently at Leicester Square. I try one end and then the other, and finally see an inconspicuous sign and half a store window with records of all makes displayed on a dais. I enter, and I begin to doubt Peter Reed. Shades of the Gramophone Shop, of the Commodore—what sort of place is this? A tiny room with one glass-enclosed booth at the end. I am wafted to the booth, four sets from my preliminary list are produced like magic, and I sit down in a pleasant wicker chair to listen.

The walls of the booth are lined with signed pictures of musicians, and the ink in the signature is real. There is Kreisler, there Schnabel, there Harriet Cohen. All express warm sentiments to Mr. Rimington. My opinion rises. I should never have been taken in by the typical Englishness of the shop. Anything that is old and good in England is inconspicuous. Later I tried the more than Fifth Avenue splendor of the great London H.M.V. store, only to return to Rimington's as to home. In a record cabinet with three sections marked "Unheard", "Wanted", and "Rejected" I see all manner of catalogues, a back file of *The Gramophone*, and a pile of *Rimington Record Reviews*, a substantial monthly pamphlet issued free to customers. Indeed, there there is a solid base under this lack of ostentation.

The machine in the booth is a large cabinet H.M.V. with a crystal pickup, but it is not good. By fiddling with the controls I finally get more bass and more treble (why do demonstrators always imagine one does not want to hear the highs?), and the result is better but by no means comparable to American machines selling in its price range of a hundred and fifty dollars. I hear the first volume of the Mozart Chamber Music Society's violin sonatas with Kraus and Goldberg. This is a must, I immediately decide, and I must also

have the second volume if I buy nothing else. \$17.50 in America, but two guineas, or \$10.00, here. The Parlophone surfaces are a shade rough, but the recording is first-rate.

Remembering my last purchase by mail in America, when over five per cent of the records had a "wow" through careless pressing, I call the salesgirl. I want to order these in automatic couplings, I tell her, and listen to them on the very records I will take so that I can be sure they are perfect. She looks astonished. They almost never have any trouble with defective records, she says; each record that is shipped is played for an inch at the center to insure against a "swing".

We make our arrangements and I ask for other recordings. The first is a single Parlophone with Kraus playing Mozart's B Minor Adagio. I can hear no more after this lovely piece. Will she have an unplayed record for me next time, I ask. Again she looks somewhat shocked, but her training is perfect. I am told that it is really unnecessary since all records are played in the shop only on thorn needles—that no steel is allowed inside the door.

Would I like to meet Mr. Rimington? I would, and am escorted downstairs where thousands of records line the walls and there are six small booths for listening. Mr. Rimington is cultivated, charming, and a first class music critic. We talk about America, which he has visited, and about records, and I receive much valuable advice. May I borrow the back files of his *Review* for the past three years? They are the only copies he has, but with no trouble I am loaded with the volumes, with catalogues of all sorts, and I stagger to my rooms to spend the evening reading and listing.

#### Counting Pennies

I shall save some money, because Columbia has issued in America just about everything in its English catalogue. Parlophone's recordings are mostly rather old, but there are a half-dozen or more new recordings by Lili Kraus that I want to own. I check Decca's new recordings of Beethoven's sonatas Opp. 109 and 110, but I regretfully see that I won't have the money to buy the Handel *Concerti Grossi* or the Purcell *Dido and Aeneas* that I want on respectable surfaces. And there is only one automatic set in the whole catalogue. But H.M.V. Here, after a struggle with the outrageous system of listing, is treasure trove. In the big sets here are the Moiseiwitsch "Emperor" *Concerto* on four-shilling records (less than one dollar, mind you), the

Furtwängler *Pathétique*, and Bachaus playing Beethoven's Opus 111. In individual records there is more Vivaldi and Handel than I want. Item after item unissued in America I jot down until I have a list representing over twenty pounds.

Two days later I return. The large booth upstairs is occupied and I am shunted downstairs where there are smaller machines with magnetic pickups which jump off the records at the heavy passages when the needle goes wrong. I have been in the airless booth for a half hour when another customer enters, and the girl ushers him into the next booth whence shortly bray the strains of the *Beer Barrel Polka*. That does not fit with Furtwängler's Tchaikovsky, and gathering my records to me I flee to the farthest booth. Mr. Rimington comes in and spies me. He grows pale with anger and apologizes. That stupid girl—this trashy music. He hates to see such people come into his shop—but when they ask for records he must supply them. But he doesn't encourage them and fortunately not many come in any more to bother his other customers. The tone is restored when a little later the Roumanian Ambassador wanders in to listen to Chopin. I learn next day that I just missed Myra Hess.

#### Records by Mail

I begin to get an inkling of the extent of the business carried on in this quiet, almost deserted shop. I seldom see more than one other customer, for most of the records are sold by mail to customers of years standing. A large export and domestic business is done. A clerk is busy most of the day packing boxes for shipment. In spite of my experience with the contiguous *Polka*, the salesgirls are far above average in their courtesy and their real knowledge of music. That day, when I came in, one was playing Elgar's *Violin Concerto* for herself, and I often heard Beethoven and Bach issuing from the central room. Somehow they seem to have heard and remembered every record I ask about, can produce it from the stacks without consulting the catalogue, and can compare the different recordings. I ask about Mahler, and one presses the *Ninth Symphony* on me, since she owns it herself. I play one side and am lost. I must have it, even at three guineas.

My records in automatic couplings begin arriving. They are arranged differently from the American system and I am not sure that I like the method. When a set has been played down one side, one simply lifts the pile



off the machine, turns the whole over as one unit, and plays it back. That certainly saves the time we spend in reshuffling the records and putting them back on the spindle individually, and it is a blessing when the last record of the first side concludes a movement; but it is nuisance when the movement breaks in the middle. According to the American system we can, at least, arrange the records to play a complete movement; here one is forced to stop the machine and change in the middle, since in a five record set, for example, side 6 comes on the reverse of side 5. My *Pathétique* breaks in the middle of the slow movement, and I tear my hair when the Mahler arrives. This is on ten records, and the automatic coupling has broken it into two sets of six and four. I must change the first set just before the last side of the first movement, and the second set after one side of the last movement. And if ever there were movements that should be played without a break, they are the Andante and Adagio of Mahler's *Ninth*.

#### English Bargains

I never cease rubbing my hands at the difference in price between English and American records. A collector should live in England. The standard price is six shillings, less than a dollar and a half, but there are a fair number of twelve-inch discs at four shillings. American Columbia makes some extra profit from its four-shilling records by charging a flat dollar and a half in the United States, but Victor charges fifty cents a record more than in England. The salesgirl was shocked when I told her that. We Americans pay more for our recorded music than any other nation. The albums, although of an undistinguished brown color, are much sturdier and better than ours. The records are removed from the side, and each envelope has a flap over the opening to keep out the dust. Why don't we have this system here? The booklets given with the sets are well-printed real pamphlets providing solid discussions of the music with illustrations from the scores of the themes and transitions. I think of the trashy American pieces of folded paper covered with some dim-wit's vague and woolly rhapsodies, and I blush.

The Decca records proved disappointing. Although their prices are the same, their surfaces are rougher than any other brand. Better, on the whole, than the cheap American Decca pressings, but still not what they should be. The only consolation is the considerable extent of their four-shilling list.

There is a tremendous sale of used records in England. I went to Foyles, the large bookshop in Charing Cross Road, and there were thousands of used discs priced from a shilling up. All were very old, and mostly operatic, war horses which I did not want, and also in poor condition, judging by their appearance. Attracted by an advertisement I wandered into the Gramophone Exchange, and there in the basement were more stacks of used discs which the store takes in partial trade for new ones and then sells at half price. A good idea—I've a few sets I'd like to trade in! I tried one or two records, and—shades of my childhood—the only machines in the basement were ancient hand-wound acoustical ones with the hugest flaring metal horns I have ever seen. And most curious needles, just like long thin slivers of steel.

The German Telefunken company competes on the English market with directly imported records which sell at six shillings. I ordered two sets. They were no longer listed in recent issues of Rimington's *Review*. This excellent review has a valuable feature: it reprints and often reviews the H.M.V. Special List (not found in *The Gramophone*). This Special List is made up of records from various foreign subsidiaries, chiefly from France and Germany, issued under English H.M.V.'s label but with special numbers. These discs are not to be found in the H.M.V. catalogue and are sometimes regularly issued later and sometimes not. I have picked up several gems from among these, notably a magnificent "*Geister*" Trio, and the Beethoven Opus 101 played by Then-Bergh. I do not know whether these records are imported or are pressed in England. Now I have every late Beethoven piano sonata, most of them denied to us in America.

#### One Last Set

The time is running short and I eagerly wait for the September list to pick up any last minute records. I bag a volume of Kreisler from the Beethoven Violin Society. I have swelled to thirty pounds, but I've been strict on amusements this summer and if I keep away from the ship's bar I'll just about have taxi fare in New York.

Then, the blow. *The Music Lover* arrives at Rimington's with a letter warning of the confiscation in customs of trademarked records. I have a day of feverish activity. First the manufacturers will furnish me plain white label records, and then they won't. The American Consulate scratches its head and allows as how it hasn't any advice on the sub-

ject from Washington but I ought to have a good chance if the trademark is totally removed. Two vigorous days scraping off the upper halves of labels are put in, and, the records snugly packed, I sail from Southamton, just beating the war. The customs officer is not curious, and I arrive home with my records safe and sound. Then a winter of playing, and not only the musical satisfaction but also the exquisite snobbery of remarking, "Here's a lovely imported record that probably never will get issued here." My friends are sick of it, but they still come to hear.

## TECHNICAL NOTES

ROBERT S. LANIER

■ Phonograph owners whose speaker is open at the back and readily movable, and who are conscious of a deadness in the tone quality of their instruments, may find a very pleasurable "livening" of tone by placing the speaker close to a wall, so that a short-period reverberation takes place. Theoretically this involves a loss of bass response, as pointed out in previous articles. However, the ear may prefer the result to that obtained with some of the less effective baffle systems. This reverberation method is not to be considered as a substitute for the full acoustic treatment of a speaker, but is distinctly helpful in many cases when an elaborate speaker cabinet is for one reason or another out of the question.

The proper placement of the speaker can only be found by experiment, and considerable "cut and try" is necessary in any given room to find the desired effect. Most often a corner position will be found effective. Record fans who have never tried moving their speaker from point to point will be amazed at the difference in quality between one position and another a few feet away. "Test" listening should be done from the seat ordinarily used for enjoying the producer. The record fan with a little energy and some ingenuity in the arrangement of furniture may find a new position for his speaker that makes all the difference between a satisfactory instrument and one that is not quite "right".

\* \* \*

Definitions of the relative tonal excellence of different violins, which for centuries have depended on the completely subjective "ear" of the user, are acquiring revolutionary new

aspects under the probing of some of the amazing electronic instruments developed within the last decade or so. The vacuum-tube amplifier, the harmonic analyser, electric wave filters, the oscilloscope and a large array of associated apparatus have been applied to the task of giving a more exact and graphic description of the "quality" of any given violin.

A "curve" is obtained which plots in a convenient form the relative strengths of the different harmonic notes produced by the violin, over and above the fundamental note bowed by the performer. Since it is the violin's own particular type of harmonic production that determines its tone quality, it might be expected that a curve that plots an essential characteristic of the harmonic production would have some correspondence with the quality of the violin. This proves to be true—violins with very closely corresponding curves are almost indistinguishable in quality.

Researchers at Harvard have found that, as far as the harmonic "curve" goes, newly made violins can be fully the equal of old ones, even those of very high quality. This finding was borne out in "blindfold" tests, in which an old and a new fiddle with corresponding curves could not be told apart by a group of listeners. One advantage old fiddles seem to have over new ones is that the old fiddles produce more sound for a given expenditure of energy on the part of the performer. This interesting characteristic contributes, apparently, to what violinists call "freedom" of tone, a special responsiveness most evident in the playing of rapid passages.

The "brilliance" of a violin depends, as was to be expected, on the strength of upper harmonics, and this kind of tone is desirable in an instrument that must carry above an orchestra. These and other researches into the relationship between the physical characteristic of sound and its aural "quality" make fascinating reading for musician and wide-awake listener. A full length article going into more detail about recent laboratory work along these lines is projected for future preparation.

## AN AMERICAN DISCOGRAPHY

Franklin P. Inglis, the author of *An American Discography* (which appeared in our February issue), has notified us of some minor errors in his article, which we hereby take the opportunity to correct.

1. Under MACDOWELL—"To a Wild Rose": record number should be V 22161; No. 7 of



"Sea Pieces" should read "Nautilus", Barth, V 20396; "Of Br'er Rabbit" should be listed a No. 2 of "Fireside Tales", Op. 61. 2. Under McBRIDE—"Swing Stuff": record number should be V 12597. 3. Under SCHELLING—"A Victory Ball": record numbers should be V 1127-8. 4. STILL—born 1895, not 1885. 5. Under MISCELLANEOUS AMERICANA: the record number for "Old Colonial Music" should be Col. 17072-D; "More Songs of the Gay Nineties" should be Decca set 48.

## OVERTONES

■ RCA-Victor has introduced a new "long life" needle, which it claims is capable of 1,000 playings without distortion under normal conditions, and which provides accurate reproduction of tone combined with a minimum of record wear. The new needle was developed from an entirely new formula, and utilizes an alloy of the platinum group of which the rarer members are ruthenium, osmium, iridium and rhodium. The price of the needle is \$1.00. Its sponsors state that "actual laboratory tests indicated good reproduction for more than 1,000 playings; however, any needle's life is dependent on such varying and uncontrollable factors as weight and type of pickup, age and condition of records, etc."

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Newspaper publicity has stated lately that "the DuPonts will enter the phonograph record field shortly with a newly invented disc designed to undersell all competition." To date, we have been unable to verify this rumor.

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Musicraft Records, Inc. announces a prize contest, open to American composers under the age of 35, for an original work for solo voice and any combination of five instruments to be based on the text of an American children's story to be selected by the composer. The length of the composition must not exceed 20 minutes playing time. The prize is \$100.00 in cash plus royalties on the recording of the work which will be issued by Musicraft in December, 1940. The contest will close on October 1, 1940. Entry blanks may be obtained from the Contest Editor, Musicraft Records Inc., 10 West 47 St., New York, N. Y. The judges of the contest have not yet been announced.

We are given to understand that Rodzinski and the Cleveland Orchestra have played some of Richard Strauss' works for records, in-

cluding a recording of *Heldenleben* . . . that Mitropoulos and the Minneapolis Symphony have recorded Franck's and several Beethoven works besides the *Coriolan* issued this month... that Nathan Milstein and the Chicago Symphony have recorded Tschaikowsky's *Violin Concerto* . . . that Helen Traubel, the American soprano, has signed a long-term contract with Victor . . . that the Philadelphia Orchestra is to make a recording of Randall Thompson's *Second Symphony*.

## EUROPEAN RECORD RELEASES

### England

- DEBUSSY: *Danse and Jardins sous la pluie*; Claudio Arrau. Parlophone R 20476.  
 LISZT: *Etudes de Concert—No. 2 in F minor, and No. 3 in D flat*; Louis Kentner. Columbia DX960.  
 MENDELSSOHN: *Sonata No. 1 in B flat, Op. 41*; William Pleeth (cello) and Margaret Good (piano). Decca K914/6.  
 MOZART: *Duets for Violin and Viola—No. 1 in G major, K. 423, and No. 2 in B flat major, K. 424*; Frederick Grinke and Watson Forbes. Decca K910/12.  
 SAMARTINI-MOFFAT: *Cello Sonata*; Florence Hooten (cello) and Ross Pratt (piano). Decca K909.  
 STRAUSS, Johann: *Voices of Spring*; Beecham and London Philharmonic Orch. Columbia LX867.  
 WEBER: *Clarinet Concertino, Op. 26*; R. Kell and Syn. Orch. Columbia DX942.  
 WEINBERGER: *Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree*; Lambert and the London Phil. Orch. H.M.V. C3148/9.

### France

- BACH, W. F. (Vivaldi): *Concerto in D minor, for piano*; Alexander Brailowsky. H.M.V. DB3073/4.  
 BEETHOVEN: *Concerto in C minor, Op. 37*; Marguerite Long and the Conservatory Concerts Orchestra. Columbia LFX581/4.  
 FAURE: *Spleen, and En prière*; Ginette Guilmant with piano. Columbia DF2486.  
 GOLESTAN: *Chant de berceau, Tzingarella*; Lola Bobesco (violin). H.M.V. L1078.  
 HANDEL: *Sonata in G minor* (2 violins, cello and harpsichord); Ars Rediviva. BAM 24.  
 JOSQUIN DE PRES: *Tu pauperum refugium* (motet); and BRUCKNER: *Ave Maria*; Strashbourg Cathedral Choir. Col. RFX71.  
 LULLI: *Cadmus et Hermione: Cantilène de Cadmus, and Alceste: Air de Caron*; sung by Charles Panzera with piano accomp. DA4924.

PUCCINI: *La Bohème*: *Aria Rodolfo*; and VERDI: *Luisa Miller*: *Quando le scere*; sung by Giuseppe Lugo.

SCHUBERT: *Piano Sonata in A major, Op. 120*; Robert Casadesus. Col. LFX585/6.

STRAVINSKY: *Deux Etudes, Op. 7*; and BACH: *Prelude and Fugue No. 13 from Well-Tempered Clavier*; Soulima Stravinsky (piano).

VIVALDI: *Concerto in D major*; Denise Soriano with orchestra. Pathé 154/5.

The French record paper, Disques, which suspended publication with the outbreak of the war, has brought out a January issue, marked "First Number of the War". The issue is understandably smaller in size than previous issues of this paper.

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Columbia announces that Sascha Gorodnitzki, concert pianist, has signed an exclusive record contract with them. . . . Royale announces that John Powell, the American composer, has signed with them to do a series of his own compositions assisted by Eddy Brown, violinist. . . . Albert Stoessel, another American composer, is to record his *Suite Antique* for Royale, the York String Quartet is to record Paganini's *Grand Quartet in E major*, and the N. Y. Philharmonic String Quartet is to record two works—one a Tchaikowsky quartet. . . . Royale also announces a complete recording of Moussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* by Alfred Mirovitch, pianist.

## THE BOOK SHELF

JAZZMEN. Edited by Frederic Ramsey, Jr. and Charles Edward Smith. Published by Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York. 360 Pages. Price \$2.75.

■ Here is a book which quite frankly starts out to talk about men who are credited with having created and perfected jazz and does just that, without confusing the issue with verbose discussions on the various styles of jazz and their relative importance. Most books on jazz up to now have had that fault: they usually ramble and occasionally they flounder in the deep water of abstract discussion of jazz. This book speaks of jazz only in relation to the men who made it. It doesn't try to explain jazz though it speaks of certain styles and shows why certain musicians inevitably wrote, or rather created, jazz that way. There is something honest, straightforward, and unhysterical about the book which makes

it thoroughly enjoyable and not just a curiosity written by some fans.

This book is not the product of one mind. It is a collection of essays written by recognized authorities in their particular fields and compiled by two well known authorities.

A complete list of its contents follows: *New Orleans Music* by William Russell and Stephen W. Smith; *White New Orleans, The Austin High School Gang, and Land of Dreams* by Charles Edward Smith; *King Oliver and his Creole Jazz Band and Return to Chicago* by Frederic Ramsey, Jr.; *Blues* by E. Simms Campbell; *Louis Armstrong and Boogie Woogie* by William Russell; *Bix Beiderbecke* by Edward J. Nichols; *New York Turns on the Heat and Fifty-second Street* by Wilder Hobson; *The Five Pennies* by Otis Ferguson; *Hot Collecting* by Stephen W. Smith; and *Consider the Critics* by Roger Pryor Dodge.

The book gives a good cross-section of opinion. Its interest is further enhanced by a fine collection of illustrations, nearly all of them never before published, and an index to the music referred to in the various essays.

—E. A.

\* \* \*

A SMATTERING OF IGNORANCE. By Oscar Levant. Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc., New York. 267 pp., price \$2.00.

■ Oscar Levant, undoubtedly a creature of impulse, followed his natural inclinations in writing *A Smattering of Ignorance*. "My first impulse," he writes, "was to fill up as many pages as possible and get the thing over, like a bad dream. Then when the editor suggested that this or that episode was not so good my only impulse was to protest indignantly, 'But it fills up two more pages!'" And so, writing in a loose and rambling manner, he has filled over 260 pages with anecdotes, reminiscences, and hilarious stories about prominent personalities. Particularly enjoyable are the Hollywood sidelights and the musical opinions of the Great Men of the Movies. Mr. Levant writes in an easy, flippant style, familiar to all who have heard his witty and spontaneous remarks on the air. The book does not attempt to be a profound analysis of music in America; yet, underneath the smattering of ignorance, there may often be found a smattering of irony. Although the author laughs at everything, his laughter is not entirely that of the clown, and there is real penetration in his observations on orchestras, conductors, Harpo Marx, Schoenberg, Hollywood, Levant, Gershwin, Copland, and many, many others.

—H. C. S.

# RECORD NOTES AND REVIEWS

## Orchestra

BEETHOVEN: *Coriolan Overture*; played by Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, direction Dimitri Mitropoulos. Columbia disc 11175-D, price \$2.00.

■ The Minneapolis orchestra is already well known on records, but its present conductor is new to the record field. Those who are familiar with the multiple gifts of this conductor know what they can expect of him. If this is a fair example of his abilities his recorded performances should indeed be of a very high order.

This is one of the most genuinely stirring readings of Beethoven's *Coriolan Overture* this reviewer has heard. Not since Mengelberg was heard with his Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam on records have we had as exciting a performance. However, the Mengelberg record, made all of a decade ago, falls far short of this splendid recording from the reproductive standpoint. The Mengelberg emanated from an era when the bass of the orchestra was more widely exploited than the higher part of its range. This often created an opaque tonal quality in the middle registers, and frequently caused the woodwinds to lack essential clarity. A rehearing of the Mengelberg disc confirms this, while the new recording saliently clarifies the whole orchestration.

Although Beethoven's *Coriolan Overture* was based on a German play by Collin, annotators have followed Wagner ever since the latter professed to see more Shakespeare than Collin in the overture. Even Tovey quotes part of Act V, Scene 3 of *Coriolanus* as a suggested analysis of the Beethoven work. According to a German annotator, the main characters of the drama are symbolized in the two principal themes—"the haughty, harsh and passionate hero" in the agitated opening theme and his kindly, persuasive mother, who in the end breaks his defiance, in the subsidiary theme, of a more songful character, which follows. Perhaps most of us listen to this music apart from any programmatic implications, and accordingly profit thereby. Mit-

ropoulos' performance does not suggest a program, and the only criticism we could make of it is that he differentiates less between the hero and his mother (if they actually are suggested in the score) than Mengelberg did.

\* \* \*

BEETHOVEN: *Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Opus 67*; played by the N.B.C. Symphony Orchestra, direction Arturo Toscanini. Victor set M-640, four discs, price \$8.00.

■ The late H. T. Parker once said of Toscanini that "none but him knows the purposes and the processes with which he approaches a piece of music and finally brings it to performance." Through the years many of the conductor's readings have altered in tempo, but never has his interpretation changed simply for the sake of a change in interpretation. The changes are in the man himself, in his feeling for and imaginative response to a score. As he has grown older he seems to have become more intense, more charged with a white heat in the fire of performance. These qualities are evidenced here with the opening chords of the first movement. The annotator of this set refers to "that brutally powerful phrase which opens the movement." His choice of adjectives may well have been inspired by the present performance; for Toscanini, unlike any other conductor we have heard, intensifies this theme with a savage forcefulness. And in the climactic passages here, and again in the last movement, he attains a tremendous cumulative impact. The propulsive drive of his performance in these places is truly amazing. Toscanini plays the first movement faster than we usually hear it; this allows him to observe the repeat of the opening section. In the second movement, he clarifies detail illuminatingly.

It is, however, in the tenebrous scherzo and the dramatic brilliance of the last movement that Toscanini's genius is most fully revealed. There is a magnificent intensification of the drama in the conductor's build-up through the shadows of the scherzo into the radiant flood of light of the triumphant finale.

From the reproductive standpoint Victor is to be congratulated on the volume of tone

that it has caught in the recording, and also upon the quality of that tone. The acoustic conditions of the studio from which the N.B.C. Symphony Orchestra broadcasts present some difficult problems; in our estimation, Victor has solved them better than the broadcasters. It is a pity that a more resonant expansiveness could not have been conveyed in the climactic passages of the symphony; nevertheless, we feel confident that the majority will agree with us that this is among Toscanini's best recordings made with his radio orchestra to date.

This is the second remarkable reading of this work that Victor has issued. In the Fall of 1938 Victor brought out a performance, made by Wilhelm Furtwängler and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra (set M-426) that was universally hailed as one of the truly great readings of a Beethoven symphony on records. This still remains true, despite the excellence of the Toscanini performance. In a final analysis these two readings emerge as the best of the *Fifth*, despite the worthy performances of Weingartner and others.

—P. H. R.

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BOCCHERINI-FRANCAIX: *Scuola di Ballo* (School of Dancing); played by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Antal Dorati. Columbia set X-157, two discs, price \$3.50.

■ Those who have seen this work with the Russian Ballet will remember it as a gay production. Based on a Goldoni story, the choreography of the ballet was made by Massine, and the music was selected and scored from works of Boccherini by the young French composer, Jean Francaix. Boccherini was a far more talented person than most of us realize. It is about time that the old allusion to him as the musical wife of Haydn was forgotten. Boccherini may not have had the technical accomplishments of Haydn, but he certainly had considerable melodic gifts. Recent revivals of his chamber music have shown us there is much to appreciate and cherish in them. The origin of the ten pieces Francaix has used to form this work is not given, and, as a matter of fact, is something which would probably interest only a scholar. Suffice it to say that the excerpts fit together very well, forming a delightful work. Francaix scores with a deft hand; there are lightness and grace in his orchestration and a fine preservation of the 18th-century spirit.

It is good to have music like this recorded, because even though we may appreciate it in connection with the ballet we seldom realize

its full charm in the theatre. Such pieces as the thoughtful *Larghetto* (opening side 2), and the *Pastorale* (side 3) are better appreciated as music *per se*. The musical enjoyment to be derived from the finale is heightened by the ingenious scoring. The *Presto* (opening side 3) brings Bizet to mind.

Dorati, associated with the Russian Ballet, gives a good account of the score, one which will undoubtedly serve the dancer as well as the general listener. Recording is good.

—P. G.

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DEBUSSY: *La Mer, Trois esquisses symphoniques*; played by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, direction Serge Koussevitzky. Victor set M-643, three discs, price \$6.50.

■ Koussevitzky has always had a flair for impressionistic music, and here he reveals his ability to make this music sound. The clarity of detail, the beauty of nuance, the extraordinary sensitivity of the playing in this recording are truly treasureable. As one of our colleagues has remarked, the freedom here from a steely quality of tone in the recording (so fatal to the music of Debussy) makes this one of the really great Debussy recordings. One could continue to heap superlatives upon this set, but this should not be necessary. Every lover of Debussy, and many who never have known the larger works of the composer, will rejoice, we feel certain, in the performance of this music here once they have heard it.

It is regrettable that the late Lawrence Gilman could not have heard this recording. He had a great love for this music, and wrote considerably about it. He called the work "a tonal rendering of colors and odors, of voices imagined or perceived, no less than that of moods and reveries." In his "Stories of Symphonic Music" Gilman quotes the French critic, M. Jean d'Undine, who says: "How can any one analyze logically creations which come from a dream. . . and seem the fairy materialization of vague, acute sensations, which experienced in a feverish half-sleep, cannot be disentangled?"

It has been pertinently said that the music of Debussy requires a sympathetic feeling between the listener and the composer. One is reminded of what the critic in "Le Temps" wrote when he first heard *La Mer*: "I neither hear, nor see, nor feel the sea." It is the utterance of someone who could not possibly understand the feeling of the composer. Debussy professed to find his "innumerable memories" worth more "than a reality that

weighs too heavily on one's thought." It has been said that his sea resembled a "studio landscape". One can hear an ardent lover of this music, like Mr. Gilman, dismissing such a comment as coming from a wholly unimaginative person.

*La Mer* is not music that one feels emotionally, as one does the music of certain other composers; for example, it is far removed from the sensuous fervor of Wagner, the friendly warmth of Brahms, the nobility of Beethoven. It is full of the vivid color splotches of the impressionist painters, of delicate nuances. It is an exploration in the realm of sonorities, and one senses a vast panorama of color and sound, as in the first section *From Dawn Till Noon on the Sea*. Koussevitzky makes this music entirely transparent, and yet infinite in its many facets of color and sound. The second sketch, *Frolics of the Waves*, is exquisitely conveyed by the conductor, and the finale, *Dialogue of the Wind and the Sea*, is brilliantly played. Altogether a memorable performance.

A previous recording, made by Coppola and the Paris Conservatory Orchestra in 1933 (Victor set M-89), is definitely eclipsed by the present set. Coppola does not begin to achieve the nuances and wealth of detail that Koussevitzky does, and his orchestra is of considerably lesser stature. —P. H. R.

\* \* \*

DEBUSSY: *Nocturnes—Nuages* (disc 5814), *Fêtes* (10-inch disc 2034), *Sirènes* (discs 15815/16-S, three sides); played by the Philadelphia Orchestra, direction of Leo-

pold Stokowski. Victor set M-630, \$6.50.

■ Debussy's *Nocturnes* are among the most difficult compositions with which a recording engineer can be called upon to cope. The music, although illustrative, is nonetheless illusive; as the late Lawrence Gilman has said, it is music that shows "Debussy's ability to rouse the inward vision, to express that which is inexpressible. . . The strange power and intensity of Debussy's art proceed from an acute awareness of the world beyond the senses—the inner life of the imagination, the secret voices of the woods, the clouds and waters. Like Tristan he hears 'the voice of the light'. He is constantly aware of some distant country of the spirit, some shadowy margin of an inaccessible world." *Nuages* is a pastel picture of the sky, with shifting clouds and changing shades of light. The subtlety of the opening chords, played pianissimo on the clarinets and bassoons at first and later on the strings, is one of the most beautiful effects in music, but has never been fully conveyed in a recording. The soft, dream-colored hues, which can be conveyed in the hall, are seemingly not transferable as yet to the record; it is not quite possible to convey the true pianissimo and have the recording fully satisfactory in reproduction. Yet, although Stokowski conveys more in the concert hall than he does here, this recording of the work is by far the best to date. It is in the latter half of the score that he triumphs, and never before have the exquisite tonal hues of this part of the music been more fully ex-

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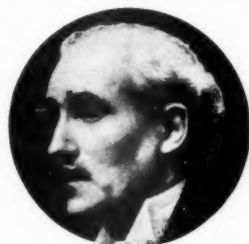
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ploited in a recording.

Stokowski previously recorded both *Nuages* and *Fêtes*. The latter recording in its day was widely praised, for it is music for which the conductor undeniably has a special flair. The present recording, with its wider tonal range and its more subtle hues, reveals much that was not apparent in the older recording. It does notable justice to the conductor's art. Although a greater climax is undeniably attained in the concert hall, it is nonetheless conveyed here with greater intensity and more dazzling wealth of tone than ever before on records.

*Sirènes* has been played several times for recording in France, but never before in this country. Its use of a women's chorus to convey the voices of the sirens that lured Ulysses makes it a more difficult composition to perform. Of the three nocturnes it is the least successful, for the voices remove us suddenly from the boundaries of the imaginative world to which we have been transported in the other works. There are moments in the score in which Debussy's musical imagery of sea and sky and light are evident, but these are few and far between. Stokowski succeeds in making this music more persuasive than any of his predecessors who recorded it, but even he cannot do for it what its composer failed to do in the beginning. The unnamed women's chorus acquits itself here with salient honors, and the shimmering orchestral texture is notably set forth.

Here, unquestionably, is the definitive set of Debussy's *Nocturnes*.

\* \* \*

RIMSKY-KORSAKOFF: *Scheherazade*, Op. 35; played by the Cleveland Orchestra, direction Artur Rodzinski. Columbia set M-398, five discs, price \$10.00.

■ The Cleveland Orchestra has not been represented on records since it made its several recordings for Brunswick back in the later twenties. The orchestra was organized in 1918, and until 1932 was under the direction of Nikolai Sokoloff. Rodzinski, who succeeded Sokoloff, has shaped and trained this orchestra into a first-class organization; and it is a pleasure to report that it emerges from these records as a highly competent and closely integrated ensemble. The woodwind and brass sections are particularly good, and the string section, if not as glowingly rich in tone as in one or two of our other orchestras, nevertheless plays with fine precision and a goodly degree of tonal warmth. The orchestra is represented this month by two album sets, this one and a work by Weinberger.

The performance here of Rimsky-Korsakoff's glittering symphonic suite, based on the *Arabian Nights* is notable for its dignity and fine masculine strength. Rodzinski does not linger lovingly over the sentiment of the music or seek to stress special effects; the score is full of tonal richness and nuance and these speak for themselves. The orchestration is clearly and fully revealed; in fact the articulation of detail is most admirable; particularly is this so in the second movement (*The Story of the Kalandar Prince*)—we cite the middle of side 4 of the recording and again the playing towards the end of side 5. In no previous recording of this work do we recall quite the tonal transparency obtained here.

Perhaps some may prefer a less weighty sea than Rodzinski feels in the first movement (*The Sea and Sinbad's Ship*), but one cannot quarrel with the conductor's right to interpret the music forcefully; after all this is a concert hall performance of the work and not one for dancers. Certainly this provides for splendid contrast. The playing of *The Young Prince and the Young Princess* here is estimably achieved without being made to sound saccharine. And the finale has fine vitality as well as the essential gaiety to make us believe that "a splendid and glorious life was that of Bagdad in the days of the mighty Caliph, when the capital towered to the zenith of grandeur. . ." The coda with the shipwreck is not over-exploited, but the trombones appropriately roar out the sea motive over the wave motive tellingly played in the strings. The crash of the wreck, and the picture fades out, for the tales are told—only the voice of Scheherazade, as depicted by the solo violin, remains. We are back to the beginning and also at the end.

Mechanically this performance has been excellently contrived. Severance Hall, in which the orchestra plays in Cleveland, is famous for its fine acoustic properties and these are made manifest in the recording.

\* \* \*

TSCHAIKOWSKY: *Francesca da Rimini*, Symphonic Fantasia, Opus 32; played by Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, direction of John Barbirolli. Victor set M-598, five sides, price \$5.50.

■ We certainly do not hear this work played often in the concert hall. This seems strange when we realize that some critics have praised it as the foremost piece of program music that Tchaikowsky wrote. It has been called a more imaginative and mature work than the popular and more widely known *Romeo and*

*Juliet*. The present writer feels that it echoes *Romco* considerably, and that despite its many fine attributes it does not succeed in effacing the magical qualities of the other score for him.

Albert Coates, who, in his day, contributed so many fine recordings of Russian works, played this work twice for the phonograph. The first performance was made in the latter part of the acoustic era, the second in 1931. Coates gave us in that second performance a remarkable reading of the score, one that was closely knit and dramatically fervent. Although the recording was remarkable in its time, it cannot stand up when compared from a technical standpoint with the present set. There is a clarity of detail here, an instrumental veracity that cannot be obtained from the older set. One of the advantages of the earlier set was the fact that it used only four sides, whereas this one takes five. Coates made a cut (traditional, we are informed) from bar 3 on page 36 (Eulenburg score) to bar 3 on page 54. The same cut is made by Barbirolli, who also makes another cut, of 17 bars, beginning with bar 2 on page 83. In all justification to Barbirolli, it must be said this additional cut does not disturb the flow of the music. Tschaikowsky has been repetitious with his material, and it is quite possible that the score could stand even more pruning without in any way destroying its continuity. The annotator has quoted from Tschaikowsky's letters regarding the composer's attitude toward this music. The composer wrote that he worked on it *con amore*, but later he confessed he did not feel that the subject had been done full justice. It is interesting to know that the composer acknowledged in this fantasy that he was influenced by Wagner's art. The year that he wrote it (1876) he visited Bayreuth and heard the *Ring*. In the introduction to the present score Tschaikowsky pointed out that the Wagnerian influence was noticeable, and he further remarked that this was strange since Wagner's music was unsympathetic to him. Prefaced to the score is a quotation from Dante's *Inferno*, which reads: "Dante arrives in the second cycle of hell. He sees here the incontinent are punished, and the punishment is to be tormented continually by the cruelest winds under a gloomy air. Among these tortured ones he recognizes Francesca da Rimini, who tells her story." Then follows an extract from the fifth canto of the poem, in which Francesca speaks. This extract is given in full in the notes.

The score is divided into three parts—the opening section "evoking the sinister and

dreadful scene which greeted Dante and Virgil as they entered the region of the second cycle, the tempestuous winds, the wailing of the damned, the appalling gloom and horror of the place. . . ." This occupies the first two parts of the recording. The second part of the work, beginning on side 3, brings the apparition of the two lovers before us. The scoring for the woodwinds in this section is most effective, and special attention should be called to the "the original and vaporous accompaniment of three flutes" heard over the chief theme played on the cellos in the middle part of this section (end of side 3). Midway on side 4 the last section of the work begins. The "lamenting ghosts" re-enter and the sinister music of the first section returns; the lovers are supposed to vanish in the "orchestral storm".

Those who have known and liked this work in the older recording will find the splendid performance of the N. Y. Philharmonic, under the able direction of Mr. Barbirolli, a more richly rewarding experience. And those who do not know it will find the recording distinctly worthwhile investigating.

—P. H. R.

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WEINBERGER: *Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree*; played by the Cleveland Orchestra, direction Artur Rodzinski. Columbia set X-161, two discs, price \$4.50.

■ Inspiration often comes to artists and musicians alike in strange places. Weinberger got his for this work from a newsreel. In the summer of 1938 at Juan les Pins, on the French Riviera, the composer tells us he saw the King of England and a group of children in a newsreel singing the old English song *Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree*. Afterward the tune lingered in his mind and he decided to write a work around it.

Despite the simplicity of the tune, the composer has been inspired to write a technically brilliantly and tonally opulent work. One recalls the composer's opera *Schwanda*, and more particularly the *Polka* and *Fugue* from it, which has often been heard in our concert halls and is, of course, available in recordings. The present composition ends up with a fugue, and, although it is not prefaced by a polka, there are other characteristic dance-like subjects in the variations.

There are seven variations in addition to the fugue. Each variation bears a subtitle; thus the first is called *Her Majesty's Virginal*, the second *The Madrigalists*, the third *The Dark Lady*, the fourth *The Highlanders*, the fifth *Pastorale*, the sixth *Mr. Weller, Senior*,

discusses widows with his son, Samuel Weller, Esq., and the seventh Sarabande for Princess Elizabeth, Electress Palatine and Queen of Bohemia. As will be seen by these titles, the composer has sought to preserve the English spirit upon which the work was based. The music is ingeniously devised and richly scored. At the beginning, after the theme is played by the orchestra, a piano has a transitional passage, and subsequently during the entire work the piano retains this connective function. It is not employed as an orchestral instrument. Despite this so-called connecting link, the composition seems episodic; each variation is precisely worked out and completely different. It may be argued that this is precisely how the variation form should be handled, but the point is that when the variations are short, as they are here, it is almost impossible to prevent the feeling that here are a series of pieces put together like a chain with uneven links. The main appeal of the work is in its orchestral brilliance, the charm of the tune and the adroit manner, from a purely technical standpoint, in which the composer has handled it. One or two of the variations has a sentient charm, but many are too weightily scored and cerebrally devised for their good. The fugue, like that from *Schwanda*, is a lot of fun.

Rodzinski gives this score a vivid reading, and the recording matches his performance.

—P. H. R.

\* \* \*

OFFENBACH: *Overture—Orpheus in Hades*; played by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction Constant Lambert. Victor disc 12604, price \$1.50.

■ About ten full-sized orchestras have recorded this overture (although many versions are no longer accessible); it has been scored for band, piano solo, duet, violin, accordion, and other miscellaneous combinations. And little wonder; for it still remains one of the utter delights of the concert stage. The present version is a rousing, uninhibited performance, which automatically brings to mind the happy days of the silent film. Lambert's conducting is consistently good; it is exciting, tender, lush, sentimental, and mock-heroic as the occasion requires. Equally good is the recording. We guarantee that this disc will bring a nostalgic tear to the eye.

\* \* \*

PISTON: *Suite from The Incredible Flutist*; played by the Boston "Pops" Orchestra, direction Arthur Fiedler. Victor set M-621, two discs, price \$3.50.

■ To those who know Piston's cerebral quartets, sonatas, *Concerto for Orchestra*, etc., this suite will afford a surprise. For the composer has unbent and written music that is fast-flowing, deft, and often witty. It was composed in 1938 as a ballet for Hans Wiener and his dancers, and concerns an incredible flutist who comes to town with the circus and does some charming, *à la* Pied Piper. The present work is a selection of the best parts of the ballet.

On the whole, the score is spirited, colorful, and probably makes excellent ballet music. There is a certain amount of banality, especially in the *Tango* and in the *Spanish Waltz*, but the gusto and verve of most of the work are indisputable. We will not easily forget the third side, where pandemonium suddenly breaks loose as the circus comes to town. In one of the loudest passages our aching ears have ever heard, there is an indescribable commotion consisting of yells, cheers, whistles, and the distinct barking of dogs. It is pleasant to think that the normally mute and inhibited orchestral players contributed nobly to the proceedings; if so, they amply made up for all their years of vocal neglect on records. But this contributes to the fun. Performance and recording are all we can ask.

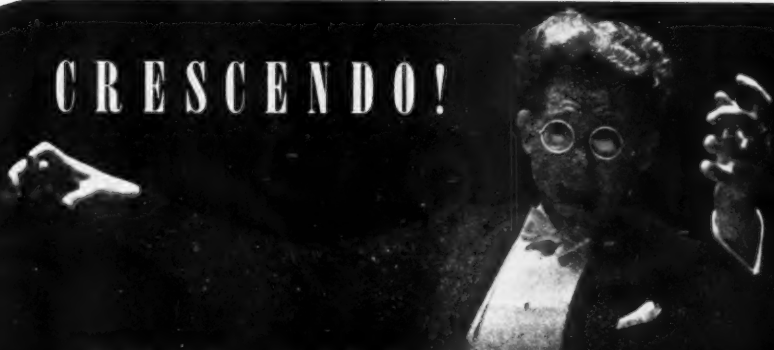
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VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: *Suite: English Folk Songs* (orchestrated by Gordon Jacob); played by the Columbia Broadcasting Symphony, direction Howard Barlow. Columbia set X-159, two 10-inch discs, price \$2.50.

■ It is strange to find a Vaughan Williams work orchestrated by someone else. True, the present arrangements are taken from a collection of folk songs merely harmonized by the English master, but those who remember his sensitive and probing *Greensleeves Fantasia* (issued by Columbia last November) will wish that he had arranged these also. This is written in no disrespect towards Mr. Jacob, whose work is capable, though by no means inspired. Jacob gives us a rather straightforward orchestral transcription, and the scoring is conventional in treatment.

Three selections comprise the present suite. These are: *March—Seventeen Come Sunday*, *My Bonny Boy* (sides 2 and 3), and *Folk Songs from Somerset*. The first is especially appealing. As in much English folk music, there is an undercurrent of sadness, which is but slightly alleviated by the more vigorous sections of the march. *My Bonny Boy* is a typical, slender, Elizabethan air. The open-

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ing of side 3 vaguely suggests sections of the second movement of the *London Symphony*. Racy and vigorous is the final selection, with the inevitable minor undertone.

The recording is clear and well balanced throughout.

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WALDTEUFEL: *España Waltz*; played by the Boston "Pops" Orchestra, direction Arthur Fiedler. Victor 10-inch disc, No. 4461, price \$1.00.

■ Most of this piece utilizes a theme that will be very familiar to those who are acquainted with Chabrier's *Spanish Rhapsody*. It is the popular conception of what a Spanish theme should be, it whirls around and around, and it finally stops. Fiedler gives it the proper spirit, and many people will undoubtedly be pleased with the result. There seems to be a certain amount of overamplification in this release.

—H. C. S.

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SUK: *Sokol March (Into a New Life)*; played by the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Václav Talich. Victor 10-inch disc, No. 4459, price \$1.00.

■ The late Josef Suk (son-in-law of Dvorak) composed this march for the seventh Sokol meet, held in Prague in 1920. Although the Sokol is primarily an athletic organization, I believe that the march has now a certain patriotic significance. I suppose many hearers will be surprised, as I was, at the familiarity of the music, which I could not have identified, beyond the unmistakable fact of its Czechish origin. It is rather pleasant occasionally to hear a march which could not have been written by Sousa. The performance here is notable for spirit rather than for finished playing, and with the full and sonorous recording, it should make a strong appeal to the Czechs and to their sympathizers in America.

—P. M.

\* \* \*

WAGNER: *Lohengrin - Prelude to Act 3*; and BEETHOVEN (arr. Cailliet): *Minuet in G*; played by the Victor Symphony Orchestra, direction Charles O'Connell. Victor 10-inch disc, price 75c.

■ Victor's idea of recording standard popular numbers by its house orchestra in modern recordings is a good one. There are a great many cheap recordings of the standard classics in the market, but none that will compete with these. It is whispered that the Victor Symphony is largely composed of members of the famous Philadelphia Orchestra; all men who have played under the conductor, Charles

O'Connell, under other circumstances.

This is the best recording of the Victor Symphony so far; the Wagner selection in fact is full and resonant and well played. Mr. Cailliet has his own ideas about arranging music; in the little minuet, which the young Beethoven wrote for piano, he tacks on at the beginning a bit of the andante from the *Fifth Symphony*. Our first reaction was to hastily remove the record to find out if we'd misread the label. But after the auspicious opening we found the gentle minuet very much in evidence, simply scored for strings. A commendable disc for all those who admire the music.

—P. G.

## Concertos

HANDEL: *Concerto Grosso in G minor, Op. 6, No. 6*; played by the London Symphony Orchestra, direction Felix Weingartner. Columbia album X-154, two discs, price \$3.50.

■ There is a nice warmth and richness of tone in this recording, but, despite the fact that Weingartner uses the harpsichord in the orchestra, the spirit of this performance is closer to Brahms than to Handel. The modern symphony orchestra is somewhat heavy for the good of this 18th-century chamber music, and a good deal of the spontaneity and forthrightness of it is lost when it is played by such an orchestra. The Boyd Neel group in England has given us good amateur performances of all the Handel Concerti Grossi.

As our reviewer said of the companion set to this one (Columbia album X-142), containing the *D major Concerto, Op. 6, No. 5*, this album will give a good deal of pleasure to the general music lover, and perhaps help lead him to investigate other orchestral works of Handel, a number of which will be found in the Columbia catalogue.

The recording here is first-rate.

\* \* \*

HANDEL: *Concerto in B flat, Op. 4, No. 2*, (for organ and orchestra); played by E. Power Biggs with Arthur Fiedler's Sinfonietta. Victor disc 15751, price \$2.00.

■ Victor has already issued a recording of this work, played by Dr. E. Bullock on the Westminster Cathedral Organ with an unnamed String Orchestra (discs 4219/20). Since this came out about nine years ago, it is naturally displaced as a recording by the present disc. The recording here is far more vital, particularly with regard to the orchestral background, and considerably less blurred than in the Bullock performance, although it



is by no means as clear as it should be. The tonal blending of organ and orchestra, a difficult problem at best, is handicapped by a distinct echo here. However, in the Bullock recording the lack of resonance left much to desired in the quality of the string background; hence it will be seen that although the Victor engineers have not solved these difficulties entirely, they have at least done a better job than the H.M.V. engineers who made the previous recording.

The question has been raised as to how far this recording and the one of *Concerto No. 10 in D minor* (Victor set M-587) adhere to the composer's original intentions. This is a matter, we believe, for the scholars to decide. From the standpoint of the ordinary music lover we have here a performance that seems to preserve the characteristic Handel style.

\* \* \*

HANDEL: *Concerto No. 1, in B flat major*; played by Leon Goossens, oboe, and the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Eugene Goossens, conductor. Victor disc, No. 12605, price \$1.50.

■ The *Concerti* of Handel speak so eloquently for themselves that it seems almost like impudence to recommend one of them. Perhaps it is enough to say that this work is up to their very high standard as music of variety and charm, and then to pass on to a discussion of the performance. But this also is difficult, for Leon Goossens and his brother Eugene have made so many invaluable contributions to recorded music that the very presence of their names on the labels should be enough to sell this record. What collector, I wonder, who knows the Columbia recording of the Mozart *Oboe Quartet* played by Leon with members of the Lener Quartet, or the Victor disc of the Bach chorale *Jesu, joy of man's desiring* in which he plays the obbligato, or again the record in the *Columbia History of Music* in which he joins with the strings of the Bach Cantata Club in a performance of the *Sinfonia* to Bach's *Cantata No. 156* — what collector who knows these things would want to skip over anything this great artist does? And how often, in English orchestral recordings, have we exclaimed over a particularly beautiful oboe passage "that must be Goossens!" This month we can have a little Goossens festival, for Leon's name appears on the two major lists, in such varied fare as this *Concerto* and the *Schumann Romances*.

What can I say now, except that the brothers do not let us down? The balance between the solo instrument and the accompanying or-

chestra is very beautifully maintained. Naturally the dynamic scale has been kept on a not too imposing level, and the oboe breathes and sings freely as it should. Still there is no lack of solidity in the accompaniment. And of course Leon Goossens' phrasing, the delicacy of his playing and the beauty of his tone are among the major delights of the month.

—P. M.

\* \* \*

HADLEY: *Concertino for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 131*; and *October Twilight, Op. 95, No. 2*; played by Eunice Howard and the Victor Symphony Orchestra conducted by Philip James. Victor set M-634, two discs, price \$3.50.

■ Hadley was a very prolific composer, and at the time of his death in 1937 he had achieved a fluent and easy style. Never a profound writer, he had a facility that made him rather popular in his day, but it is doubtful whether his fame will be more than ephemeral.

This work is a good illustration of Hadley's style; it is at once an illustration of his good points and a merciless demonstration of his weaknesses. The *Concertino* was written in 1933, and dedicated to Eunice Howard, who plays it here. Although it is in one movement,

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there are three well-defined sections, with the opening subject reappearing several times.

Since it is an American product, one would like to praise it; yet, try as one might, there is nothing much to like. And, worse yet, there is nothing to dislike. The music is skilfully written, it has a swiftly moving piano part, and the harmonies are nicely spiced up. But all is wholly conventional and pedestrian. In the opening and closing sections there is more than a passing nod to Ravel and a Gershwin "blues", and certain sections provide a momentary interest. Outside of that, especially on the second side, the proceedings are very dull.

*October Twilight* is mild impressionism of the salon school, saccharine in nature. Both this and the *Concertino* have been well recorded.

—H. C. S.

### Chamber Music

BEETHOVEN: *Trio, No. 4, in C minor, Op. 9, No. 3* (for strings); played by the Pasquier Trio. Columbia set M-397, three discs, \$5.00.

■ It is fortunate that in his early days Beethoven interested himself sufficiently in the string trio as a medium to leave us six examples of what he could do with this limited and difficult combination. The present work, the third such trio in his Op. 9, was his last essay in the field, and as these trios were published in 1798—when the composer was 28 years old—it will be seen that they could hardly represent a very mature Beethoven. He had not yet "freed" himself—had not yet developed that personal expression in his music with which he laid the foundations of romanticism. I say that this is fortunate for several reasons. The first is the disarming simplicity and grace of the three Op. 9 trios, which, incidentally, characterize the *Serenade* for string trio, Op. 8, as well. To be sure, these works are not lacking in prophecy of the things which are to come in the later music. The meditative *Adagio con espressione* of the present work, with its serious and somewhat embarrassed expressiveness, is a case in point. But in general the works stem from Mozart and Haydn, and are marked rather by the detached spirit of classicism which Beethoven happily mastered before he allowed himself to pass on to his own more personal world of music. As he matured, of course, he wanted larger and more elaborate means of expression, and so he never could interest himself again in the string trio. It is fortunate, too, in view of his later development, that he overcame the

difficulties of trio-writing, because by placing upon himself such restrictions he was working to the development of his later style.

And from the point of view of our own day it is fortunate again, for without the Beethoven works in this category, there would hardly be repertoire enough to hold the Pasquier brothers together as an active chamber music organization. They have already recorded for us the *Serenade, Op. 8* (Columbia M-341) and their playing of the first of the Op. 9 trios has been released abroad. The present set, I take it, is the same that won for Pathé the Grand Prix Candide in 1935, although judging by its quality the recording might be more recent. It would be difficult to imagine a finer performance of this work.

—P. M.

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LEONARDO LEO: *Concerto for four violins*; played by Eddy Brown, Roman Totenberg, Benno Rabinoff, Boris Schwarz (violins), accompanied by harpsichord, cellos and bass. Royale 10-inch discs 1826/27, 75c each.

SINDING: *Serenade, Op. 56*; played by Eddy Brown and Roman Totenberg (violins) and Jascha Zayde (piano). Royale 10-inch discs 1809/10, price 75c each.

■ Eddy Brown has long been active on the air giving concerts of old and modern chamber music, and these pieces are undoubtedly drawn from the repertoire of his radio concerts. Both works were distinctly worthwhile recording, although musically one is of lesser import than the other.

The pleasant surprise is the Leonardo Leo work, a genuinely fine 18th-century *concerto da camera*. Leo has an interesting history. He was born near Naples in 1744, and was a pupil of the elder Scarlatti. In his technical handling of the orchestra as well as in the suavity of his melodies, he is said to have surpassed his famous teacher. Besides writing sacred works, he composed some 60 operatic compositions and also chamber music. There is a grandeur of style and a fervent expressiveness in this little work, which is divided into four movements (each taking one record face)—a forceful opening *Maestoso*; a bright, alert fugue; a Bachian *Andante*; and a gay final *Allegro*.

The performance is accomplished with admirable technical mastery and tonal fluency. And the recording is good.

Sinding's work, although less auspicious, owns an individual charm. It is well contrived and represents its composer far better than anything else of his that has been recorded.

Sinding was a contemporary of Grieg; but, curiously, his music is less characteristic of his native land, although in spirit it is not far removed from Grieg. Such short pieces for violin and piano were popular in the latter part of the 19th-century, and Sinding wrote a number of them. The work is divided into four movements—*Marcia; Andante; Allegretto; and Allegro*.

Brown and Totenberg exploit the technical rather than the emotional aspects of the work. Their performance is a wholly competent one. The recording is good, but would have profited with more piano. The violinists seem a little too close to the "mike" for the good of the balance.

The surfaces of these discs are by no means even, but the majority are on the quiet side.

\* \* \*

ZIMBALIST: *Quartet in E minor* (seven sides); and KROLL: *Little March* (one side); played by the Gordon String Quartet. Schirmer Album Set No. 6, price \$6.00.

■ Efrem Zimbalist was born in Russia, but he has been in this country so long that we think of him as an American, which of course he is by naturalization. Zimbalist has always

been an admirable chamber music player, so it not surprising to find him an admirable composer of chamber music. The present quartet, although written in 1932, is not his first chamber work; it was preceded by a string suite and a sonata for violin and piano.

Being Russian, Zimbalist has turned to his native land for many of the melodies that make up the opening fantasia of the quartet. They are of a Slavic character and recall tunes that Glazounoff used in his *Five Novelettes*, for string quartet. The work is consistently melodic and dark-hued in color; the Slavic feeling predominates. Although the composer makes good use of opposing lines, the quartet is not strictly speaking a contrapuntal one. The melodic flow of the inner lines in the different sections definitely gives the feeling of specific harmony, yet it could be hardly said that the quartet is a purely homophonic one. In fact the writing partakes of both styles. This, however, makes for easier assimilation on the part of the listener; and to those who know and admire the plangent Slavic feeling in music the work should be appealing. Curiously, the middle part of the fantasia (the first movement) recalls Ravel's style, although it is said that Zimbalist feels no affinity with

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the Frenchman. But this sort of thing, when the material is imaginatively treated and sincerely felt, as it is here, may well make the music more instantly perceptive to the listener coming upon it for the first time.

The quartet is divided into four movements, the first a Fantasia, the second a Scherzo, the third a Romanza, and the fourth a *Moto perpetuo* with a coda harking back to the thematic material of the first movement.

Both the gracious scherzo, entirely lyrical in feeling and style despite its *con brio* marking, and the swift-paced finale are ingeniously conceived. The Romanza is admirable for its sustained melodic lines. The repetition in the coda of the thematic material of the first movement supplies unity to the work.

The Gordon String Quartet, with its warm, sensuous tone, is heard to advantage in this music. If the violin of Mr. Gordon seems too dominant at times this may be blamed on the composer.

The *Little March* by William Kroll, first violinist of the Coolidge Quartet, is a clever piece faintly reminiscent of Prokofiev's *March in The Love for Three Oranges*.

\* \* \*

SHOSTAKOVICH: *String Quartet, Op. 49*; played by the York String Quartet. Two Royale discs, 580/81, price \$1.00 each.

■ Although this bears an opus number later than that of the composer's *Fifth Symphony*, (Op. 47), it would seem to us an earlier work, possibly one that Shostakovich had started and laid aside and then decided to finish at a later date. For the quartet lacks the imagination and fire of the symphony, and suggests a less mature viewpoint. Perhaps the composer has no genuine feeling for the string quartet, although he has contributed one outstanding chamber composition, *Two Pieces for String Octet*.

The present work is divided into four movements, and although it does not precisely follow the pattern of the classical quartet there is more than an intimation that the composer was influenced by it. Its modernity of spirit, however, is unmistakable, although harmonically it is quite tame for Shostakovich. The opening *Moderato* suggests a Russian Haydn, even though one knows the music would not have been written in Haydn's day. Still, it owns a similar geniality. The second movement, also a *moderato*, could hardly be called a slow movement, but it has a characteristic suavity. The third movement, marked *Allegro molto*, is the best of the four. Here the ingenious craftsmanship of the composer im-

presses immediately. Schubert's *Erklung* is brought to mind at the opening of this movement. The final allegro makes good use of dance-like tunes. The scoring of the quartet is interesting; the first violin and cello are strongly featured throughout, and frequently, as in other works of the composer, he employs only a single instrument.

The piece is capably played by the York Quartet. The reproduction is quite satisfactory, although at times a better balance could have been obtained. There is a higher surface on the review copies than one expects nowadays.

\* \* \*

SCHUBERT: *Quartet No. 9 in G minor, Op. Posth.*; played by the Coolidge String Quartet. Victor set M-641, two discs, price \$4.50.

■ Schubert wrote this work in his 18th year. It is the ninth of his early quartets, all of which were written for an amateur group to which Schubert belonged. Unlike some of its predecessors, and more particularly the *Quartet in B flat* (misleadingly numbered Op. 168), which was written in less than five hours, this work took all of a week to complete. Outside of the first movement, which has a Haydnesque breath, and an unusual technical construction (outlined by the annotator), this work cannot be termed of much significance. The andante is gracious, but emotionally it does not go below the surface. Thematically it is not imposing and its repetition of material, resulting from its having the form of a rondo, weakens it.

The minuet lacks grace but is effectively constructed. It is a curious movement quite unlike what one expects from Schubert; the annotator states that it stems in mood from the corresponding movement in Mozart's *G minor Symphony*, but this seems to us an unimportant observation. Schubert pays his respects to Haydn in his final rondo, which owns a youthful verve and elation.

The performance of this work has been accomplished with style and polish, although the dynamic range is somewhat limited. The recording balance is good. —P. H. R.

#### Keyboard

BACH: *Toccatas and Fugues, Vol. 2—C major Toccata, Adagio, and Fugue, and Dorian Toccata and Fugue in D minor*; played by Carl Weinrich on the "Praetorius" Organ at the Westminster Choir College, Princeton, N. J. Musicraft set 37, three discs, price \$5.00.

■ This album presents some of Bach's finest organ works, and those who have enjoyed Weinrich's previous organ records, played on the same instrument, will undoubtedly want this set. It is, of course, a companion to Musicraft set 36. The tonal qualities of this organ may seem austere to listeners accustomed to modern organs. But the details of Bach's intricate contrapuntal writing are sharply etched on this "Baroque organ," and because of this the fugal sections of both works gain while the toccata sections do not. These toccatas can stand more tonal splendor than the player achieves here.

The *C major Toccata, Adagio, and Fugue* has never been issued on records in this country before (it is included in the Pathé set of *Three Centuries of Organ Music*), and only the *Toccata* of the other work is available, on an old Victor record. The fugue of the latter is one of greatest ever written for the organ; as the annotator says, it is "one of the purest pieces of organ polyphony in the whole literature of the instrument." And Weinrich's performance of it is a marvelous one, wonderfully controlled, but vibrant and alive. He has been justly praised for the vitality of his playing; he has never been guilty on records of what could be termed a really dull performance.

The adagio of the first work has that ineffable quality of beauty that belongs to so many of the slow movements of Bach. It is played as Weinrich, and presumably Harrison (the designer of the organ), would have us believe Bach would have played it. One wonders whether Bach would have preferred the richer sonorities of the modern organ to the brittle and more sharply contrasted ones of the Baroque organ. Stokowski, realizing the moving qualities of this lovely Adagio, has made a transcription of it for modern symphony orchestra (Victor disc 8495), and the Lener String Quartet have played it also in an arrangement for strings. However, the true Bachian will undoubtedly be interested only in this organ version.

Musicraft has done notable justice to Mr. Weinrich's fine playing in both works.

—P. G.

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BACH: *Sheep May Safely Graze* from *Birth-day Cantata* and HANDEL: *Arrival of the Queen of Sheba*; played by Ethel Bartlett and Rae Robinson, duo-pianists. Columbia disc 69818D, price \$1.50.

■ Both of these are, I believe, first recordings. Some years ago Grainger made a piano transcription of the Bach excerpt, which he later

recorded; but no previous two-piano version exists. *Sheep May Safely Graze* is taken from the cantata *Was mir behagt, ist nur die munt're Jagd* (secular cantata No. 8, Peter's edition). Originally a soprano aria, it is one of those long, glorious melodies that winds its way into the very heart. The original is Bach at his simplest and most sublime; the transcription transmits some of the sublimity but is not so simple. It is played in a pellucid manner, and the flow of inner voices is carefully conveyed. The slightly pompous but agreeable Handel excerpt is also excellently played. Surfaces and recording are excellent. Bartlett and Robinson are among the three or four finest two-piano teams in existence, and this disc is a good illustration of their powers.

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CHABRIER: *Scherzo-Valse*; and RUBINSTEIN: *Staccato Etude*, Op. 23, No. 2; played by Reginald Stewart, pianist. Victor disc 12606, price \$1.50.

■ Reginald Stewart is well known to radio listeners as the conductor of the Toronto Promenade Concerts. Before he took up the baton he had achieved considerable success as

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a pianist. His list of teachers is impressive: among them were Phillip, Boulanger, Hambourg, and Friedheim. Stewart's background as a pianist therefore is thorough, and it need occasion no surprise that Victor has engaged him in that capacity. This first appearance on American lists shows that he is a wholly competent performer; the selections he has chosen do not afford much of an insight into his interpretative powers, but he plays with ease and fluency. The *Scherzo-valse* (No. 10 of *Pièces pittoresques*) is a trifling thing, largely composed of a leaping theme that jumps about but never gets anywhere. More familiar is the *Staccato Etude*, which is fast passing into oblivion. The latter is not played with dazzling virtuosity but it is given a good performance; Stewart captures the lyricism of the second section, and the left hand comes through clearly. In both selections there is a sparing use of the pedal, which adds to the clarity of music like this. Although not the best that Victor has done, the recording is good.

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HAYDN: *Sonata No. 7 in D*, and *Presto* from *Sonata No. 11*; played by Ernst Victor Wolff, piano. Columbia set X-158, two 10-inch discs, price \$2.50.

■ Most pianists have played this sonata in their early student days; it is usually studied after Clementi, during Czerny, and before Mozart. Musically it is of slight importance, though it has a happy briskness. It is quite short, and Wolff observes virtually all of the repeats. On the whole, it is played with intelligence and clarity by the soloist. The left hand, however, is too heavy; in rapid sections Wolff emphasizes the Alberti bass to the detriment of the melodic line. For the most part, it is a faithful and scholarly performance, and the artist gets about all that can be derived from the composition. The recording is good.

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SAINT-SAËNS: *Variations on a theme of Beethoven, Op. 35*; played by Genia Nemenoff and Pierre Luboshutz, duo-pianists. Victor set M-638, two discs, price \$4.50.

■ These *Variations* are typical of Saint-Saëns. They are polished, and as elegant as the kid gloves that the composer is said to have worn sometimes while playing the piano; but they have none of the grandeur, poetry, or imagination of the Schumann or Brahms variations. Based on the *Trio* from the third movement of Beethoven's *Sonata, Op. 31*, they follow the original theme closely,

and most of the interest of the composition is in the part-writing for the piano. The composer was a great pianist, and from the technical point of view his treatment of the material is sparkling and interesting. As a matter of fact, the work is perfectly constructed and beautifully proportioned; indeed, it has everything but that touch of genius necessary to give life to a composition.

The performance given by Nemenoff and Luboshutz is splendid. Their playing is closely welded, their attacks are firm and precise, and the execution is clean and vigorous. The recording, moreover, does them full justice. Bartlett and Robinson have recorded this work, but their version is over six years old, and cannot compare with the present one. Now that Victor has signed Nemenoff and Luboshutz, we may perhaps expect a recording of Schumann's *Andante and Variations*, which is long overdue.

—H. C. S.

### Instrumental

FRIML: *Chansonette*, and *Mazurka*; played by William Kroll (violin) and Rudolf Friml (piano). Schirmer 10-inch disc No. 2006, price \$1.00.

FRIML: *Mignonette*, and *Canzonetta*; played by William Kroll (violin) and Rudolf Friml (piano). Schirmer disc No. 2520, \$1.50.

■ These familiar salon duos for violin and piano by Friml are given sympathetic performances by Kroll and the composer. Of the four pieces the *Mazurka* is the most substantial, and undoubtedly the most difficult to play. The recording, obviously of a studio genre, is good, but, being cut less full than it might be, makes for more surface noise than should be necessary. Undoubtedly a non-metallic needle will eliminate the worst of this.

—P. G.

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LEONARD: *Serenade Humoristique (à l'espagnole)*; played by Eddy Brown, Mischa Mischakoff, Benno Rabinoff (violins) and Jascha Zayde (piano). Royale disc No. 583, price \$1.00.

SARASATE: *Navarra*, for two violins and orchestra (*Spanish Dance, Op. 33*); played by Eddy Brown and Roman Totenberg with string orchestra. Royale disc 582, price \$1.00.

■ Belgium in the latter half of the 19th century boasted some famous violinists who were also regarded as able composers, such as Bériot, Vieuxtemps, Ysaye, and Hubert Léonard. Léonard published some highly regarded technical studies as well as other

compositions for his chosen instrument. The above piece, although intended to be Spanish in style, is more Gallic in feeling than Iberian, and faintly reminiscent of similar works by French and other European composers. Its principal interest would seem to be the fact that it is written for three violins, and therefore lays stress on technical rather than emotional problems. It is excellently played here and well recorded.

Sarasate was of course a Spaniard by birth, and his melodies, if not actually folk tunes, are entirely in the character of his native land. The present piece is similar to his other Spanish Dances, by turns songful and vivacious. It is well played and recorded, although the surfaces here are not as smooth as they might be.

—P. H. R.

\* \* \*

SCHUMANN: *Romances for Oboe, Op. 94, Nos. 1-3*; and FRANCK: *Pièce*; played by Leon Goossens, oboe, with piano accompaniments by Gerald Moore. Columbia set X-160, 2 discs, price \$3.50.

■ This set represents music not only off the beaten track but music that is well worth hearing. Schumann was never so happy as when he was writing in miniature, and much of his best music is in the small forms. These romances reveal the composer at his most romantic and most introspective, and are as impressionistic in their way as the preludes of Debussy. I might add that the first and third are Schumann at his most melancholy; written in 1849, they foreshadow the composer's later psychopathic irregularities.

The first of the set is, harmonically, melodically, and structurally, intensely typical of the composer. A questioning and plaintive theme in the oboe is answered by the piano, and the effect is very beautiful. It is sensitively phrased and performed by the soloist. The second *Romance* is in a happier mood. I am sure that I have heard it as a piano solo; perhaps it is from the *Albumblätter*. At any rate, it is gracious, appealing, and perfectly lovely. Altogether different is the melancholy No. 3; the opening theme, backed by a simple accompaniment, suggests a pastoral atmosphere not unlike that of the prelude to Act III of *Tristan* (although there is no thematic resemblance).

Franck's *Pièce* is quiet and simple. It is not typical of the composer, having none of the lush chromaticism associated with his name. This, as well as all of the Schumann works, is perfectly fitted for the oboe and this album has none of the monotony that one might expect. Musically it is one of the most appeal-

ing thing I have heard in some time. Goossens performs in a manner that brings out all of the best qualities of the music; he makes his instrument respond to every shade of expression. Add to this the tasteful and well balanced accompaniments of Gerald Moore, and the result is a set that may be recommended without reservation.

—H. C. S.

## Voice

BALLADS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND THE WAR OF 1812: *Free America*; *Unhappy Boston*; *The White Cockade*; *Yankee Doodle*; *The Boston Tea Tax* (disc 26458); *The Chieftan's Bride*; *The Bombardment of Bristol, R. I.* (disc 26459); *The Ballad of Bunker Hill*; *The Death of Warren*; *Johnny has gone for a Soldier*; *Riflemen's Song at Bennington* (disc 26460); *The Capture of Major Andre*; *Nathan Hale*; *Cornwallis' Country Dance* (disc 26461); *The Constitution and the Guerriere*; *Hey, Betty Martin*; *Hunters of Kentucky*; *Ye Parliament of England* (disc 26462); sung by John and Lucy Allison, with Sawyer's Minute-Men. Victor 10-inch set, P-11, price \$4.25.

■ John and Lucy Allison are a couple of New Jerseyites who have long been interested in the art and science of recording, besides making an extensive study of early American folk music. This set of records is, so far as I know, their first bid for nationwide attention as recording artists. What they have to offer is welcome because of its novelty, because of its national interest, because of the real humor of much of their material, and because of the apparently authentic manner of their performances. This is a set of records over which we can relax for a pleasant half-hour, or which we can point out to our children who are studying American history. It is not for the musical sophisticate—unless he can bring himself completely to forget for awhile the weightier matters which generally hold his attention.

The most obvious remark after listening to the set is an expression of scorn for those who claim that America has no folk music. It is true that the tunes here presented are not on the whole notable for their originality—many of them will be recognized as borrowed from earlier English songs, and some are familiar in later versions—but all are good, hearty stock, and there is enough variety to save the album from monotony. The texts are for the most part typical of their time: they combine the upright patriotism which inspired such things as *The Star Spangled Banner* with a certain dry and already "American" humor.

The way in which the details of a story are crowded in—as for instance the causes of the death of Parson Burt in *The Bombardment of Bristol, R. I.*—is always amusing, as are the not very gentle jibes at the British which crop out in most of the songs. There are several ballads in the collection which have a flavor of a later day—for example *The Chieftan's Bride* and the tune (not the words) of *The Young Volunteer*. *Nathan Hale*, on the other hand, is distinctly of its own time, and not without a certain dignity, and *Johnny has gone for a Soldier* is a tune which would do credit to any generation, and will linger long in the ears of the listener.

Mr. and Mrs. Allison both do their share of the singing (she a little more self-consciously than he) and the Sawyer Minute-Men both sing and play various kinds of accompaniment. Since I understand Mr. Allison performs on a number of instruments himself, it may be that some of the guitar, accordion or drum playing is his. In any case it all makes very entertaining listening, and the recording is quite satisfactory.

\* \* \*

JEANNETTE MACDONALD IN SONG: *When I have sung my songs* (Charles); *Do not go, my love* (Hageman) (disc 2047); *Lover, come back to me* and *One Kiss* (from *The New Moon*) (Romberg) (disc 2048); *Ave Maria* (Gounod); *Les Filles de Cadix* (Delibes) (disc 2049); *Faust: Le Roi de Thule* and *Air des Bijoux* (Gounod) (disc 2050); sung by Jeannette MacDonald, soprano, with piano accompaniment in the first two songs by Giuseppe Bamboschek, who conducts the orchestra in the others. Victor 10-inch set M-642, price \$6.00.

■ So far as I know the career of Jeannette MacDonald is practically unique. As the First Lady of the musical talkies, she has long been one of the greatest drawing cards in Hollywood, and she achieved her eminence without benefit of previous celebrity in concert hall or opera house. Now, reversing the usual order of such things, she has taken to making concert tours, in which, we are told, she is climaxing all her previous successes. Victor is simply riding the tide in releasing this set of her "favorite songs."

I have not heard Miss MacDonald in the flesh, and so I have no idea of the natural size and impressiveness of her voice. I remember, however, in one of her films, that, as a popular prima donna she gave us flashes of every standard soprano role from Marguerite to Isolde—an achievement to parallel

those of the Nordicas and Lehmanns of other days. The present selection taxes neither her imagination nor her musicianship, nor does it offer anything in the way of a novelty. All of the song can be had on other recordings: the important point, to Miss MacDonald's public, is that here it is her voice singing them. And the voice is unmistakably the one familiar to frequenters of the movie houses. Somewhat brittle, rather artificial if you will, but strong in its power to move the millions. The piano accompaniments of Giuseppe Bamboschek belong to the tradition of "vocal teacher accompanying." He is more successful as a conductor. Of the *Faust* aria (the *Roi de Thule* and the *Jewel song* are really parts of the same *scena*) it should be said that the *Roi de Thule* is cut down to one stanza without recitative, and that a good half of the first record side is given over to the long recitative preceding the *Jewel song*.

\* \* \*

MASCAGNI: *L'Amico Fritz: Duetto delle ci-liege*; sung by Mafalda Favero (soprano) and Tito Schipa (tenor) with La Scala Orchestra, conducted by G. Antonicelli. Victor disc, No. 15837, price \$2.00.

■ This disc restores Mascagni's *L'Amico Fritz* to the Victor catalogue, affording at the same time a new sample of the ever welcome art of Tito Schipa and the pleasing singing of Mafalda Favero. The music is of no great importance: it is a graceful and pleasant trifle, without any genuine distinction. This is not the hot-blooded Mascagni of *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Iris*, but a rather serious-minded young Italian trying his hand at lighter things. The two artists present an excellent case for his music. Mr. Schipa is, as always, a joy to hear, not so much because of the sound he makes, as because of the intelligence which lies behind that sound. And Mme. Favero (pleasantly remembered by record buyers as the Margarita in Columbia's *Meftistofele*, and by Metropolitan patrons for her one season in New York a year ago) is an Italian soprano of distinctly the better type. There are some really lovely phrases in her part of this duet.

\* \* \*

NEGRO SPIRITUALS: *Were you there?* (unaccompanied); and *Hear de Lambs a-cryin'*; *Plenty Good Room* (arr. by Roland Hayes); sung by Roland Hayes, tenor, with piano accompaniment by Reginald Boardman. Columbia disc, No. 69812D, price \$1.50.

■ *Were you there?*, sung simply and without accompaniment by Roland Hayes, is one of

the most moving musical experiences I have ever had. Those who know Mr. Hayes' recent Columbia album, remembering *He never said a mumblin' word*, will have an idea what to expect, but the full pathos of this performance is not to be imagined—the record must be heard. The two companion songs are scarcely less simple, for the accompaniments arranged by Mr. Hayes make no attempt, like those of Mr. Burleigh, to be artistic in themselves. They simply provide support and background.

There as been no singer in my experience who could more successfully lose himself in the songs he sang. As we listen to this record we hear, somehow, not so much Mr. Hayes as the ageless songs of his people—the story of the crucifixion, the exhortation to Peter to “feed my sheep,” and the comforting assurance that in Heaven there will be a place for all, however lowly here on earth. The last song is one of the type so often burlesqued by white singers to whom message means nothing, and to whom the syncopated rhythm is irresistibly amusing. Mr. Hayes is a man of intellect, but also a man of understanding; with all of his experience and artistic training he has not lost his modesty nor his sympathy with the humbler folk of his race. To hear Roland Hayes sing these songs is to know Roland Hayes.

Mechanically the series which Columbia has been making with this artist must take its place among the very finest vocal recordings issued in this or any other country.

\* \* \*

NEGRO SPIRITUALS: *Bye and Bye*; and (a) *Joshua fit de Battle of Jericho*; (b) *Walk together, Chillun*; (arr. by Hall Johnson); sung by the Hall Johnson Choir, conducted by Hall Johnson. Victor 10-inch disc, No. 4460, price \$1.00.

■ The Hall Johnson Choir is undoubtedly the most famous negro chorus before the public in our time. Its gifted conductor has somehow succeeded in striking a balance between the training necessary to distinguished choral singing and the free and improvisatory spirit of characteristic negro music. *Bye and Bye* and *Joshua fit de Battle of Jericho* are among the most familiar spirituals, and *Walk together, Chillun* is typical enough. Typical, too, are the infectious performances, which convey much more of the real meaning of this kind of music than the more usual solo singing with piano accompaniment. The voices are fresh and alive, and there are a couple of soloists, especially the tenor in *Bye and Bye*,

who really merit label credit. The recording is excellent.

\* \* \*

RUSSIAN LITURGY (Kiev Monastery): *Blessed is the Man, Hallelujah*; and IPPOLITOW-IWANOW: *Behold, Bless ye the Lord*; sung by the Siberian Singers, conducted by Nicholas Vasilieff. Victor 10-inch disc, No. 4462, price \$1.00.

■ This is one of the most impressive examples of Russian choral singing I have ever heard. Not only has the very characteristic music a deep and majestic beauty of its own, but it is matched by a performance of great dignity and the most affecting simplicity. This splendid chorus never strains for effects—in fact there are none of those effects which so often seem to be a part of the choral music of the Russians. The music apparently comes directly from their hearts, with only the color of their rich and sonorous voices to clarify its meaning. The recording is superb.

\* \* \*

THOMAS: *Mignon: Je suis Titania*; and GOUNOD: *Faust: Air des bijoux*; sung by Josephine Antoine, soprano, with Columbia Opera Orchestra, conducted by Wilfred Pelletier. Columbia disc, No. 69813D, \$1.50.

■ Josephine Antoine, one of the more brilliant of our younger sopranos, makes her record debut in what seems to be the traditional manner—with two popular warhorses. The *Mignon Polonaise* was by no means an unwise selection, since, surprisingly enough, there is at present no recording of it sung in the original French listed in either the domestic Columbia or Victor catalogues, and the aria was omitted in the Columbia abridged recording of the opera. The choice of the *Jewel Song* as a companion, however, is less happy, since only a supreme mistress of its particular type of singing can ever hope completely to bring it off, and since in presenting her version of it the young singer must break spears with two such mistresses who have recorded the aria electrically—Norena for Victor and Yvonne Gall for Columbia. Both recordings are still listed in the catalogues. A direct comparison is invited this month by the simultaneous release of the *Jewel Song* in Jeanette MacDonald's Victor recital.

The greatest lack in Miss Antoine's singing seems to me to be summed up in the one word “sparkle.” The voice quality is round and pleasing, but it wants a certain brightness and “edge” to give it real vitality. This is true no less of her singing of the recitative in the



*Faust* selection than it is in the pyrotechnics of the *Mignon*. Of course in the latter the standard was set by Tetrizzini, and it is doubtful if any other soprano will ever sound particularly dazzling in it to those who know the great Italian's old recording. On the whole Miss Antoine comes about as near it as any recent singer I have heard. She is always intelligent, and her passage work is planned with care and executed with skill. In the *Faust* aria a greater lyricism is needed, and neither she nor Miss MacDonald has quite enough of this. Victor's prima donna gives a brighter tone quality here, but neither lady has the lightness and lilt to be found in the singing of Mmes. Norena and Gall.

The accompanying orchestra, conducted by Mr. Pelletier, plays satisfactorily. —P. M.

### Opera Sets

**PUCCINI:** *La Tosca*, Opera in 3 Acts (complete recording sung in Italian). Victor sets M-539 (seven discs) and M-540 (seven discs), \$14.00 each. Recorded in the Reale Opera House in Rome, Italy, with Chorus and Orchestra under the direction of Oliviero de Fabritiis. Cast: Floria Tosca—Maria Caniglia; Mario Cavaradossi—Beniamino Gigli; Barone Scarpia—Armando Borgioli; Angelotti—Ernesto Dominici; Sacristan—Giulio Tomei; Spoletta—Nino Mazziotti; Sciarrone—Gino Conti; Shepherd Boy—Anna Marcangeli.

■ Victor, if it wished, could have exploited this recording as sung by leading Metropolitan stars, for the three principals have all in recent years been featured artists at the Metropolitan. Both Gigli and Caniglia, as a matter of fact, have sung Cavaradossi and Tosca there with considerable success.

It is nearly ten years since the old Victor and the still current Columbia sets of *Tosca* were issued. Since then recording has advanced with notable strides, and the greater realism in an operatic performance via records today makes for more enjoyment. The present set, made in the Reale Opera House in Rome, owns a spaciousness and resonance behind the voices and orchestra that were entirely missing in the old sets. With this new recording one feels one is tuning in on an actual performance in the opera house, rather than just listening to a recorded version of the opera.

Neither of the older sets of *Tosca* could be called first-rate performances of the opera. Of the two the Victor set was preferable, chiefly because Carmen Melius, a famous

*Tosca* in her time, was in the stellar part. Hers was a warmly human portrayal of the jealous diva, and her singing was at all times artistic and appealing. Of course, the lady's pulchritude was not conveyed in the recording, but there were probably many who remembered it from the days of Hammerstein's Manhattan Opera. Her associates were less imposing. Granforte as Scarpia was competent; but Pauli, as Cavaradossi, was a washout. Columbia's *Tosca* set had a better tenor (Grandi), but a less imposing soprano (Scacciati).

In the new set Gigli is the featured singer. He is in fine voice throughout, and although he is guilty of excesses it would be difficult to think of anyone who could turn a better all around vocal performance. Maria Caniglia brings to the leading role a rich, vibrant voice which she employs to full advantage. If she lacks some of the finesse of Melius, she makes up for it with the natural beauty of her voice. The sinister and sadistic aspects of the character of Scarpia call for excesses of passion. Although Borgioli indulges in these upon occasion, he nevertheless sings with assurance and style. The part of Scarpia was made for the theater where he can be seen as well as heard, rather than for recording. The orchestral direction of de Fabritiis is of a high order, and from the opening record to the last face one is fully aware that the conductor is contributing much to the shaping of the performance. The chorus and the singers of the minor roles are entirely competent.

The popularity of *Tosca* in the opera house recalls our good friend Emma Eames and her first efforts to sing the part, a role in which she later became justly famous, at the Metropolitan. Maurice Grau, then the general manager of the Metropolitan, held up his hands in horror when she suggested it. "Not even you would make the public like it," he said. "An opera with a torture scene, a murder, a shooting, and a suicide! Nothing doing!" But Eames insisted, and the public upheld her choice of the role. *Tosca* and *Aida* became the diva's most popular parts. The melodramatic plot of *Tosca* makes for good theatre, and although musically it cannot be ranked with the composer's *Bohème* it is nonetheless one of his best scores. —P. H. R.

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**WAGNER:** *Three famous scenes: Tristan und Isolde—Love duet* (discs 15838/9); and *Liebsted* (disc 15840); *Götterdämmerung—Brunnhilde's Immolation* (discs 15841/2); sung by Kirsten Flagstad, soprano, and Lauritz Melchior, tenor, with the San Fran-



cisco Opera Orchestra, conducted by Edwin McArthur. Victor set, M-644, \$10.00.

■ The Victor publicity department has anticipated the reviewers by advertising this set as the Wagnerian's dream recording. Surely it contains one of the most anxiously awaited features to issue from the studios since the advent of Mme. Flagstad. Now at last we may hear in our own home, and at our own time, the voices of the two most celebrated Wagnerian singers of our time, joined in the most sensuous love music of all time. For good measure Victor adds to this a new recording of Flagstad's *Liebested*, and her first of the great *Immolation* from *Götterdämmerung*. The orchestra is that of the San Francisco Opera, and the conductor Mme. Flagstad's accompanist, Edwin McArthur.

The last previous recording of the *Tristan* duet was the famous one made nearly a decade ago by Mr. Melchior with Frida Leider. At first glance it would seem that the new version replaces that still effective performance, but upon investigation it becomes clear that it does not. For neither recording is complete, and each contains a good deal of the music omitted from the other. The Flagstad-Melchior discs begin with the words *O sink' hernieder, Nacht der Liebe!*, include the famous passage known as *Brangäne's Warnung* (sung here by Mme. Flagstad herself) and continue with some cuts to the entrance of Kurwenal. Leider and Melchior began with Isolde's signal and Tristan's entrance, only arriving at *O sink' hernieder* with their third record side. Brangäne's music was omitted, but some cutting was still necessary in order to bring the singers to the same ending as that of the new recording. It should be noted that in the new version Wagner's sour chord which ends the lovers' ecstasy has been altered to a simple major, apparently to make a concert ending.

In comparing the two recordings we are reminded of the fact which we of today are so likely to forget—that Frida Leider also was a great and individual Isolde, and that having this music sung by her as well as Mme. Flagstad will hardly constitute a duplication. The older recording benefited greatly by the experienced and vital conducting of Albert Coates, who seems to have imparted no little of his own excitement to the singers. In both recordings some manipulation of the compensation controls will be necessary in order to get a proper balance. Otherwise the voices are allowed to dominate unduly. The effect of distance in the new version has been suc-

cessfully conveyed in the soprano's singing of the Brangäne passage, and it will prove interesting to her admirers to hear her voice in this music. To some it will seem unfortunate that the *Liebested* was included in the set rather than a more complete duet, since the lady's admired singing of the finale has been for some years available, with orchestra conducted by Hans Lange, on Victor 8859. However, we are given to understand that she never liked the former recording and that she is entirely satisfied with the newer one. The engineers have perhaps been somewhat kinder to the singer here, but again compensation will be necessary to bring the voice into focus with the orchestra.

In general the same remarks apply to Flagstad's *Immolation* scene, which, however, as a "first" is a much needed and eagerly anticipated recording. —P. M.

#### Other Recordings

BUZZI-PECCIA: *Colombetta*; CHOPIN: *Tristesse (Etude in E major, Op. 10, No. 3)* (arr. Burle Marx); sung by Bidu Sayao, soprano, with piano accompaniment by Milne Charnley. Victor disc, No. 15448, \$2.00.

FENNER: *When Children Play*; and HUGHES: *O men from the Fields*; sung by John Charles Thomas. Victor 10-inch disc 2033, price \$1.50.

RULE BRITANNIA, THE BRITISH GRENADIERS, and GOD SAVE THE KING; B.B.C. Orchestra, direction Adrian Boult. Victor 10-inch disc 4352, price 75c.

THOME: *Simple Aveu, Op. 25*; and MENDELSSOHN: *Spring Song*; Victor Salon Orchestra, direction Marek Weber. Victor 10-inch disc 26444, price 75c.

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# SWING MUSIC NOTES

## ENZO ARCHETTI

■ A new series of jam sessions was inaugurated February 25th at Nick's in the Village, and is scheduled to run for a short period. The unique feature of this series is that it is being conducted by Harry Lim, the internationally known jazz critic (see "Time" of August 21 and "Life" of September 11) from the Netherland Indies. In the short time he has been in New York, Mr. Lim has met every jazz musician worth meeting, heard all the jazz worth hearing, and taken part in every jazz event worth its salt. He is now definitely part of the New York picture. He has even had the unique distinction of having an Ellington work dedicated to him, on the occasion of an Ellington broadcast during which Mr. Lim was interviewed. A new and unnamed opus was then and there called *Java Stomp*.

This writer had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Lim a short time ago and was pleased to learn that he read this column as regularly as every other jazz periodical. Mr. Lim proved to be a pleasant, soft-spoken young man who said little but what he said sounded authoritative. An enthusiast on jazz but not a fanatic, he speaks with a twinkle in his eye and in impeccable English. The jam sessions cannot help but be successful when conducted by such a man.

But to return to the details of the actual jam sessions: they will be held every Sunday from 3:00 to 6:00 P. M. Just who will participate will depend completely upon who is in or around New York.

As regular entertainers at Nick's nightly there is the newly formed Sidney Bechet Quartet, consisting of Sidney Bechet on clarinet and soprano sax, Charlie Howard on guitar, Kenneth Clark on vibraphone and drums, and Wilson Meyers on bass. They began their engagement February 18th and they will probably be there for a long time. Bechet's Quartet plus Sonny White on piano, calling themselves by the classic name of the New Orleans Feetwarmers, now record for Bluebird.

Two new labels have been added to the already long list of records on the market: "General" and "General Tavern Tunes" both sponsored by Consolidated Records, Inc., of New York which really is Reeves Studios.

They launch their new venture very ambitiously with a whole album of piano discs by Jelly-Roll Morton entitled *New Orleans Memories*. Quite obviously taking advantage of the success of the book *Jazzmen*, whose chapters on New Orleans music and life were by far the most interesting, this set of records is in a sense a supplement to those chapters. Eight of the ten sides are original Morton compositions of the period described in *Jazzmen*; the period ranges from 1900 to 1910. They are: *Maimie's Blues*, *The Naked Dance*, *The Grave*, *Buddy Bolden's Blues*, *Winin' Boy Blues*, *Mister Joe*, *Don't You Leave Me Here*, and *King Porter Stomp*. The remaining numbers—also of the same period—are Clarence William's *Michigan Water Blues* (a first recording) and Scott Joplin's *Original Rags*. A fine booklet goes with the set, one written by Charles Edward Smith (one of the editors of *Jazzmen*) and Alan Lomax, based on biographical and historical data supplied by Jelly Roll Morton himself.

The latest records received for review:

*Ballin' the Jack* (Smith) by the Louisiana Rhythm Kings (Red Nichols, trumpet; Miff Mole, trombone; Benny Goodman, clarinet; Joe Sullivan, piano; Bud Freeman, tenor sax; Dave Tough, drums); and *Windy City Stomp* by Miff Mole and his Orchestra (Red Nichols, trumpet; Miff Mole, trombone; Frank Teschmaker, clarinet; Joe Sullivan, piano; Eddie Condon, banjo; Gene Krupa, drums). H.R.S. 15, Price 75c.

The first was originally recorded on Vocalion 15828 and issued in 1930; and the second for Okeh in 1929 and never issued.

Both are good examples of Chicago style but, frankly, I do not see why it was thought necessary to resuscitate these records.

*Krazy Kapers* (Carter); and *Once Upon a Time* (Carter) played by the Chocolate Dandies (Max Kaminsky, trumpet; Floyd O'Brien, trombone; Bennie Carter, alto sax; Choo Berry, tenor sax; Teddy Wilson, piano; Lawrence Lucie, guitar; Ernest Hill, bass; Milton Mezzrow, clarinet and drums. In *Once Upon a Time*, Sidney Catlett replaces Mezzrow on drums). H.R.S. 16; Price 75c.

Now here we have a horse of a different color. This disc is alive; the music, the soloists, everything is awake, going places and doing things. *Krazy Kapers* begins with a spanking good tempo and leads to some first rate sax and trumpet work. There is excellent team work and individual virtuosity throughout. *Once Upon a Time* is in slower tempo, which gives everybody time to think things out more carefully.

This originally was an Okeh disc recorded in 1933. It is *not* merely of historical interest; it is musically interesting and therefore its reissue is thoroughly justified.

*Weatherbird* (Oliver); and *Dear Old Southland* (Layton, Creamer); trumpet solos by Louis Armstrong with (1) Earl Hines at piano, and (2) Buck Washington at piano. H.R.S. 18; Price 75c.

Although Louis Armstrong made many records with all kinds of orchestras and combinations, strangely enough this is the only record Louis made as a soloist in the strict sense. Both pianists have important parts (in Earl Hines' case, even a whole chorus) but actually their parts are strictly supporting roles. Louis is the whole show and what a grand show! Although it was made in 1929 and originally issued as Okeh 41454 it is as fresh and enjoyable as if it were made yesterday. More so, in fact—judging by some of his more recent recordings. This reissue is recommended.

## IN THE POPULAR VEIN

### Horace Van Norman

AAAA—*Wham*, and *Little High Chairman*. Mildred Bailey. Columbia 35370.

■ This is another knockout Bailey recording following close upon the heels of her magnificent disc of last month, *Nobody Knows De Trouble I've Seen*. This one is considerably less pretentious artistically, the accompaniments being in a hot idiom rather than the quasi-Delusionian impressionism of Wilder's. They are none the less praiseworthy on this account, however, boasting among other points some highly exceptional piano work by someone who sounds like Teddy Wilson but probably is not. *Wham* is a slow teaser in high favor with the swing bands of late, notably Glenn Miller, and Bailey puts it over terrifically. Her artistry in a purely rough-house item of this variety is something that is quite indescribable and the somewhat more sentimental item on the reverse is of equal effectiveness. This is, in fact, a tune of considerable distinction written by Willard Robinson, that well-nigh Forgotten Man of Amer-plorable (aren't they all?) but Bailey manages ican song writing. The lyric is completely de-

to infuse it with enough sincerity to make it palatable.

AAAA—*High Voltage*, and *Foster Chile*. New Friends of Rhythm. Victor 26503.

■ *High Voltage* is an extremely ingenious and effectively written item somewhat in the Raymond Scott—Bert Shefter idiom penned by Alan Shulman, cellist and arranger for the New Friends of Rhythm, and spectacularly well played here by this highly competent and versatile group. If, as previously hinted, the actual musical content of *High Voltage* is not completely original, the effect upon hearing it for the first time is definitely of something quite new under the musical sun. Aside from the sheer perfection of the ensemble playing, an outstanding feature of the performance is the brilliant harp work of Miss Newell, the group's only feminine member, and an artist of the first rank.

AAAA—*Friendship*, and *Palms of Paradise*. Kay Kyser and his Orchestra. Columbia 35368.

■ It is quite possible that the biggest hit from the score of *DuBarry Was a Lady* will ultimately turn out to be the last one to be recorded—*Friendship*. This home-spun little ditty is put over with abandon and a high degree of animal spirits in the show by Lahr and Merman, and the recording here by Kyser is faithful to the spirit if not the letter of their memorable performance. It is, in truth, a very comical job indeed that Kyser and his crew of monkeyshiners do with this rather curious Cole Porter product—curious to be coming from Cole Porter, that is. It's a very epic of corniness and has been erected with loving care by a master of musical showmanship if there ever was one, our own Monsieur Kyser. And it has been carefully enough worked out so that it will bear frequent repetition, something that can seldom be said for so-called "novelty" dance records. *Palm of Paradise*, on the reverse, isn't at all funny.

AAA—*I Love Life*, and *My Mother Was a Lady*. Jerry Colonna. Columbia 35371.

■ *I Love Life* is, I think, Prof. Colonna's highest achievement to date. He sings higher and louder on it, anyway, than in anything he has done thus far, as well as bringing a certain rugged quality to it not found in his work since the epochal *Song of the Open Road*. I don't see how it would be humanly possible for anyone to sing this seriously after hearing Colonna's crucifixion of it, which is a bit of a pity, since it really isn't such a bad song—of its genre. But all is grist to Colonna's mill, and all very, very funny too.

AAA—*Too Romantic*, and *Sweet Potato Piper*. Tommy Dorsey and his Orchestra. Victor 26500.

■ A brace of numbers from the forthcoming Bing Crosby—Bob Hope film, *The Road to Singapore*, these are from the pen of the most consistently successful songwriting team yet employed on Crosby films, Johnny Burke and Jimmy Monaco. I think that in some rather mysterious manner, these writers understand Crosby better than any of the other admittedly first-rate song-smiths who have labored on the Crosby vehicles, and their work always gives the effect of having been tailor-made for Bing's superlative talents as a popular songster and an American personality. The recordings here are adequate, if scarcely that, with the rollicking *Sweet Potato Piper* taken at a surprisingly deliberate tempo and utilizing a new Dorsey vocal group, The Pied Pipers, who are too much like the Modernaires for comfort. Incidentally, Dorsey's new male vocalist, Frank Sinatra, appears on the reverse, and impresses as a less saccharine Jack Leonard.

AAA—*Burnin' Sticks*, and *Here's Your Change*. "Toots" Mondello. Royale 1817.

■ One of the nation's better saxophonists shows his wares here in a couple of rather nifty items of his own concoction. Somewhat bizarre affairs they are that have little or nothing in common with the average saxophone show piece and are obviously not designed merely to display Mondello's brilliant technique. The considerably-more-than-perfunctory piano accompaniments are played by Claude Thornhill, with Nick Fatool at the drums.

AAA—*Peanut Vendor*, and *Business Men's Bounce*. Raymond Scott and his New Orchestra. Columbia 35363.

AAA—*Just a Gigolo*, and *Huckleberry Duck*. Raymond Scott and his New Orchestra. Columbia 35364.

■ Finally heeding this department's advice—and maybe a couple of other people's as well—Raymond Scott has organized a full-size band and these are its initial releases. It turns out to be more like anyone else's band than the Quintet was, but it is still a highly distinctive and much more expressive medium for Scott's rather grotesque—if cerebral—creations. The most interesting and original item of the lot is *Huckleberry Duck*, which is a sort of schottische in swing in what might be described as a skipping-rope tempo. But if this is charming and humorous, the others are merely very, very clever, and we have by now

become quite thoroughly accustomed to Mr. Scott's cleverness.

AAA—*Tu Volveras*, and *In Sunny San Domingo*. Xavier Cugat and his Orchestra. Victor 26501.

■ Cugat, America's foremost dispenser of Latin-American music, is up to his usual high standard here. *Tu Volveras* is a bolero which has the potent Cuban rhythm but which is garnished with such a wealth of orchestral color that it is a joy to the ear. *In Sunny San Domingo* is much nearer a conventional American fox-trot, but Cugat's treatment of it is no less appealing.

### OTHER CURRENT POPULAR RECORDINGS OF MERIT

(The following are rated from quality of performance regardless of record quality.)

AAA—*Tuxedo Junction*, and *Danny Boy*. Glenn Miller and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-10612.

AAA—*Put It Away*, and *Uptown Blues*. Jimmie Lunceford and his Orchestra. Vocalion 5362.

AAA—*Give a Little Whistle*, and *Peach Tree Street*. Woody Herman and his Orchestra. Decca 3008.

AAA—*Love for Sale*, and *Wham*. Jack Teagarden and his Orchestra. Varsity 8202.

AAA—*Ooh What You Said*, and *Air Mail Stomp*. Bob Crosby and his Orchestra. Decca 2992.

AAA—*Flea On a Sprec*, and *The Sphinx*. Teddy Powell and his Orchestra. Decca 2985.

AAA—*Elcgy to a Jitterbug*, and *The Acrobat*. Rex Irving and his Orchestra. Royale 1845.

AAA—*I Know What You Do*, and *Dream Blues*. Johnny Hodges and his Orchestra. Vocalion 5353.

AAA—*Clap Hands Here Comes Charlie*, and *Southland Shuffle*. Charlie Barnet and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-10602.

AA—*Huh Uh-Huh*, and *Chitlin' Switch Blues*. Slim Gaillard and his Flat-Foot-Floogee Boys. Vocalion 5341.

AA—*Headin' For Hallelujah*, and *Alice Blue Gown*. Harry James and his Orchestra. Varsity 8201.

AA—*Do It Again*, and *Sincere Love*. Cab Calloway and his Orchestra. Vocalion 5364.

AA—*Robins and Roses*, and *My Melancholy Baby*. Red Nichols and his Five Pennies. Bluebird B-10593.

AA—*Keep A Knockin'*, and *Major and Minor Stomp*. Jimmy Dorsey and his Orchestra. Decca 2980.

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